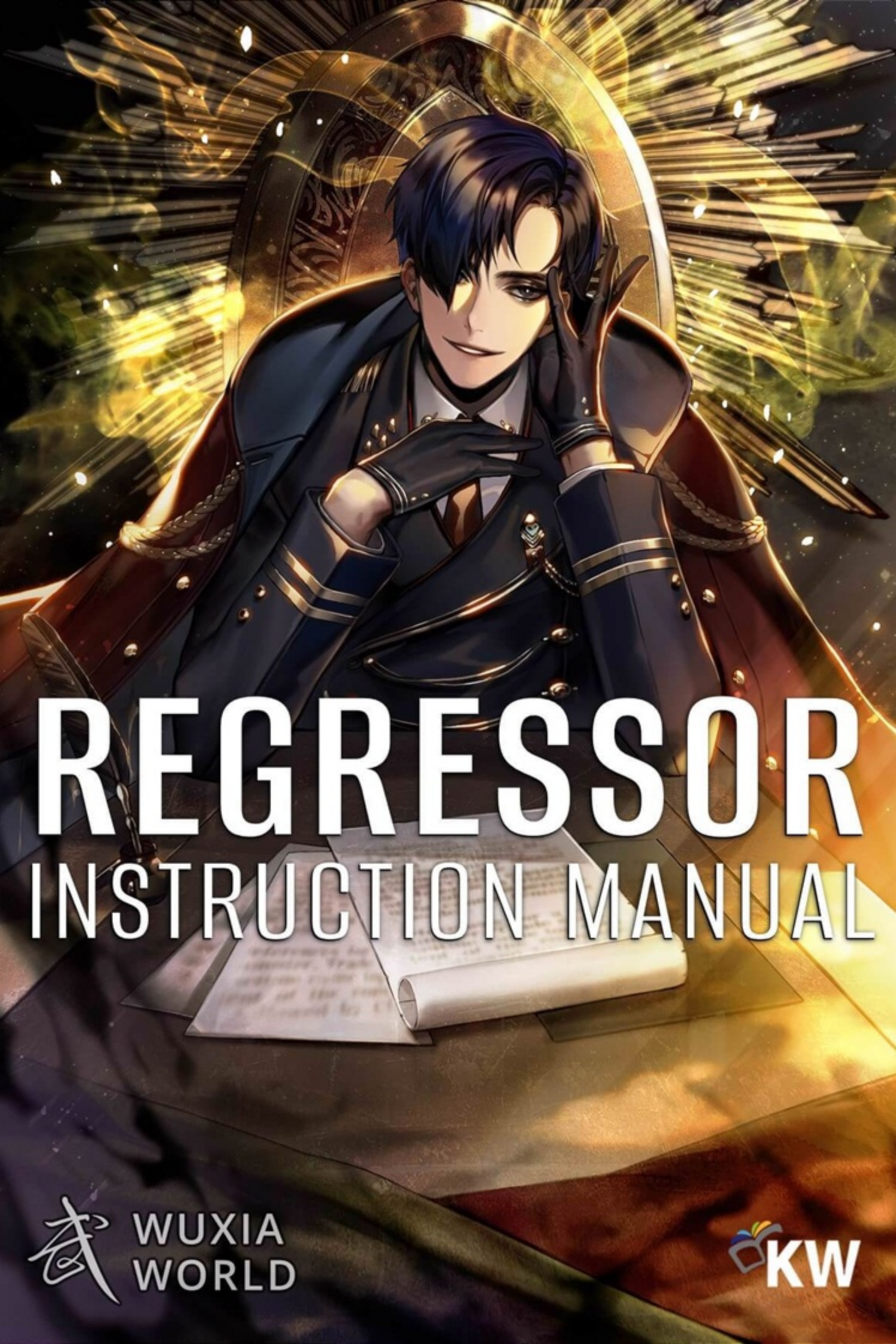
REGRESSOR
INSTRUCTION MANUAL
WUXIA WORLD
KW

REGRESSOR INSTRUCTION MANUAL

– 회귀자 사용설명서 –

- VOLUME 15 -

-AUTHOR-
흙수저

-ILLUSTRATOR-
이유 / eu

[WUXIAWORLD]

CHAPTER 702
SOULMATE (1)

“We might be able to resolve this if this goes well,” Lee Ji-Hye said.

“What do you mean, unni?” I[1] asked.

“It’s like I said. We might be able to resolve this without having to fight,” she replied.

“What?”

‘What the hell is she talking about?’

“It’ll probably be difficult to fix this since we made it such a big deal, but I think we may be able to just let it pass. I’m sure oppa is thinking the same thing… Since they already said that they were demons, we just have to act like we've driven them out, and then we can write out an agreement to wrap this up.

"Yeon-Soo, get me some coffee. I need to make a call after I drink it,” she requested.

“Coffee isn’t the problem right now. What were you talking about just now? What did you mean by wrapping this up? I don’t really understand…” I confessed.

“If what that blue-haired man said isn’t a lie, then we might not have to fight. It’ll be a waste to lose manpower. The people here are genuinely fighting for the continent, and they’re top-tier people considered high-ranking adventurers…

"They’re not crazy as well. We need them to take a step into a brighter future. Don’t you think that sacrificing them would be kind of heartbreaking? If what they truly desire is the prosperity of the continent, doesn't that mean that we have the same interest as them?” she explained.

“I… really don’t understand. How can you come to that kind of conclusion? Are you sure we saw the same thing just now?” I questioned.

“Of course. Am I the weird one?” she asked.

'What the hell is she thinking? This unni… '

It was only for a moment, but I felt a shiver down my spine.

'What the heck is going on? Really? That's really what's going to happen?'

It was so shocking that I couldn't even laugh about it.

'What is this?'

She seemed serious. She wasn't saying it as a joke or for laughs. She wasn't being indirect, either. The seriousness in her gaze told me she accepted that bullshit explanation. She had agreed with the idea that they would manage and protect humanity akin to prisoners.

'Is she serious?'

I knew she was kind of a scummy person, but I didn't think she'd actually agree to that.

"Don't think too deeply about it, Yeon-Soo. There's no need to contemplate it… Think about it this way. You just have to think about which option is more advantageous to us. You'll immediately find the answer when you think about it. I'm not *that* twisted, and I know what they're saying are just ideals," Lee Ji-Hye explained.

'Ideals or whatever aren't important.'

"I also know that there are many ethical issues," she added.

"So… are you saying this is beneficial? Even if that's the case, this is—"

"What?" she interrupted.

"T-This isn't right, unni," I answered.

"What was the Black Swan Guild like?" she asked.

"What do you mean?" I questioned.

"Did you feel free?" she asked.

“I don’t know what kind of answer you’re looking for,” I told her.

If there was no other intention behind that question, then I could say that I felt free. Of course, it was an undeniable fact that there was some level of control because it was an armed group.

‘I think it was especially like that in the past before Ji-Hye unni joined.’

The discipline was strict, and their level of punishment was high. In fact, it was natural for guild members who had caused trouble to the guild to go missing or disappear. There were many incidents that I couldn’t quite describe with words, and there was a clear demarcation line between the superiors and the subordinates.

The mood of the guild changed when Miss Park Yeon-Joo became the guild master, but to be exact, it was after Lee Ji-Hye had gained power that fit her position. The guild system changed so fast that existing guild members couldn’t keep up, and even though many expressed their concerns about the sudden changes, the new system was implemented perfectly into the guild.

The work efficiency increased as the atmosphere of the guild became freer, and those who had been saying that we would never catch up to the Blue Guild and the Red Mercenary Guild went quiet.

Yeah, the guild became less constrained as a result. Living as a member of the Black Swan Guild made me feel like the protagonist of a fantasy novel, and I even felt like the world belonged to me.

I nodded slowly.

“What do you think? Were we really free?” Lee Ji-Hye asked cautiously.

“…”

“Do you really think that the members of the Black Swan Guild were really free? You really think that’s what they felt?” she questioned.

“What… are you trying to say?” I asked.

“I just think it’s worth thinking about once. It’s just an assumption that this could be possible. If you build a big enough fence, the sheep inside won’t even know that

they're in it. *Ah*, sorry, Yeon-Soo. I'm not saying you're a sheep, and I haven't done a social experiment on the Black Swan Guild either.

"However, it's not like what they're saying is complete bullshit. Of course, there's a difference depending on how you look at it, and there's a moral line that we can tolerate… That's why an agreement is needed. Don't you agree?" she asked.

"…"

"They'll build a really big fence. We won't be able to see the ones that built it, and mankind won't even know that beings like them exist. We'll only remember the fact that we won the war. Mankind will be free. They'll feel safe and free; they'll also prosper, all thanks to the reliable guardians. We'll never run out of natural resources," she said.

"T-That's ridiculous. Nonsense. How can you say such a thing… I don't want to think this way, but… it's different from the Black Swan Guild. Even if the system you had implemented was successful in an armed group, there's no guarantee that it'll work on the continent… Even if you're the one behind it…" I said.

"It's impossible by myself," she commented.

"Yeah, t-that's…"

"But it's possible if I have Lee Ki-Young with me," she added.

'C-Crazy bitch.'

I unknowingly cursed at her in my mind.

"You being inside the fence is—"

"No, Yeon-Soo. I'm going to be in a higher position. Higher than the worker pigeons who had built the fence. I'm not the one who gets dragged around. I'm the one who drags," she interrupted.

'She's a crazy bitch. A… c-crazy bitch.'

What was so great about her that I had been following her all this time? I started having mixed feelings, and I hoped she was joking around.

I wasn’t sure how she reached that conclusion by listening to the blue-haired angel’s brief explanation, but I couldn’t hold back the nauseousness I was suddenly feeling.

Her face, which I normally find cute, looked distorted in my eyes, and I started to feel dizzy. I couldn't say for sure, and it was also unbelievable for her to think that way.

It was like she saw mankind as nothing but… chess pieces.

‘Does she really think she’s superior? Does she think she’s higher than most people?’

I didn't think she was superior to most people, but Lee Ji-Hye seemed to think that way. She wasn't superior to us right now, but she could become superior. I didn’t know what made her think that way, but the environment she lived in back on Earth was probably what had made her this way. I had heard some rumors about it, but it was definitely possible that she had been living in that kind of environment on Earth, but still…

‘I can’t understand her.’

I felt an unknown sense of anxiety. What did she think of me? Ha Yeon-Soo? Did she think of me as another chess piece? Had she even truly cared for me? Was there even a hint of truthfulness in the sweet words she had whispered to me? I wasn’t sure if she even considered me as a human being.

My voice started trembling and even though it wasn’t like me to behave like this, I had to say something.

“U-U-Unni… what do you…”

“What do I think of you?” Lee Ji-He asked.

“…”

“Were you worried?” she questioned.

Whether I was worried or not wasn’t important.

“Yeon-Soo,” she said.

“Yes?”

“I want you to keep this one thing in mind,” she said.

“…”

“People like us care a lot about our people.” She continued.

“…”

“Even if I were offered one-third of the people on the continent, I wouldn’t trade them for you. How can I trade away the people whom I love? No matter how great of a deal those pigeons will offer, I won’t do it if you’re not with me. If I were to give a more extreme example… I might just give everything up if you die,” she confessed.

“G-Give up what?” I asked.

“My ideals, dreams, and ambitions,” she answered.

“…”

“I’ll take revenge on your killer and on the world that gave birth to that killer. Of course, that’s not what you really want, though, right?” she asked.

“I-It’s not,” I replied.

“The random thoughts I told you were for my own benefit, but it’s also to protect the people I cherish. Of course, I don’t know if there will be some kind of agreement, but I don’t want to see the people I cherish get hurt. If you get hurt on the battlefield, I really won’t be able to endure it,” she said.

‘So what kind of feelings do you have for me exactly?’

I was too scared to ask. I had no idea if she said that because she considered me as an equal or she considered me as a pet or a chess piece.

Actually, was she even speaking the truth? Perhaps she was just saying that to make me feel better. After all, she was the type of person who would lie at every chance she got so long as she would emerge with some profit afterward.

I looked into her eyes and saw her grim expression.

I wasn’t sure what was going on, and I couldn't tell whether she was a good or a bad person. I was confused, but there was one thing I was sure of—my face mirrored in Lee Ji-Hye’s eyes looked really happy. I was smiling as if I had the world at my feet.

“My arm hurts. Are you just going to stand there without helping me?” Lee Ji-Hye complained.

“No, I’ll help,” I said.

I reached my hand out slowly while thinking that I might be crossing a bridge I could never return and that I'd regret grabbing her hand.

And that was when I felt a presence nearby.

‘What the… ’

“How…”

I saw a brown-haired angel, and its otherworldly appearance took my breath away.

‘How… did it get in?’

How did it get inside the headquarters? What were the guards doing? What about the defense system? One question led to another, but I couldn’t find the answer because having these kinds of thoughts was useless at this point.

My actions were faster than my thoughts. I unsheathed my weapon and rushed toward the angel. I glanced at Ji-Hye unni and saw that she was shocked.

Eventually, she frowned and started mumbling, “Looks like the negotiation failed. Actually… the problem is if we can even get out of here alive."

‘I’ll save you, unni.’

The woman with brown braided hair extended her hand slowly toward me with a sad expression. I told myself that I needed to stop her chanting, but I couldn't move at all.

“You’re a dangerous human. You’re a human… that shouldn’t exist on this continent,” the brown-haired angel said.

“I’m honored that you think so. Your name?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“My name is Dominions. I hope you’ll forgive me,” Dominions said.

“Unni! Run! Unni” I shouted.

“Where am I going to run to?” she questioned.

“Hide behind me!” I told her.

“It’s all useless, Yeon-Soo. It’s too late. I'm not that good at fighting, but I know that much at the very least. Dominions, right? More importantly, you’re making a mistake. You’ll probably regret this. You’ll regret this decision if your goal is truly the prosperity of the continent,” she said.

“…”

“I told you, right? People like us can’t stand watching those we cherish getting hurt…” she repeated.

“U-Unni?” I stuttered.

“I really wanted to see that control freak succeed, but it looks like I won’t be able to see it. Oppa, you’re watching, right? I’m embarrassed and find it really funny to say this, considering our relationship, but I really loved you,” she confessed.

“…”

“Somewhat,” she added.

“…”

“Actually, about half of half,” she continued.

“…”

“I’ll see you in hell, my soulmate,” she said.

Whiiiiiiiiiiir!

A shrill noise instantly pervaded the room.

“Unni!!” I shouted.

Booooooooooooooooooom!!!

---

1. Ha Yeon-Soo’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 703
SOULMATE (2)

“Where should I start… *Hm*… When I was on Earth, I had all sorts of jobs,” Lee Ji-Hye said.

“…”

“I really had all sorts of jobs,” she repeated.

“What are you talking about, noona? I won’t believe you even if you suddenly create a serious atmosphere,” I[1] told her.

“What? We can’t have a serious conversation? I’m just telling you because I want to, so it doesn’t matter if you believe me or not. Just listen,” she said.

“Do you know how many times you’ve talked about Earth so far? You say something different every time, so how can I—”

“This isn't a prank this time. You always try to avoid it whenever I try to talk about something like this. That’s a sickness, you know. You don’t need to use this method to tell me that there’s something mentally wrong with you.

"Spending time to understand each other a little better isn’t anything amazing… You’re pathetic. So pathetic. You’re such a coward whenever you act like this. Don’t avoid it. You don’t need to stop yourself from getting too affectionate with me. It’s over, anyway,” she explained.

“…”

“Anyway, going back to what I was saying, I had all sorts of jobs, but there’s no need for me to tell you exactly what kind of jobs they were. You won’t listen or trust me, anyway. Expect half of it to be a lie, and just listen. You know people exaggerate a lot whenever they talk about their past,” she suggested.

“What’s your point?” I asked.

“I’m not telling you just to get straight to the point. What kind of person do you think I am, Oppa?” she asked.

“…”

“You probably think I’m a crazy bitch. Maybe a psychopath? A villain?” she continued.

“…”

“I was like that in the beginning, so you probably see me as a villainess in those dramas or just a hopeless scum. It’s understandable since I'm a criminal bitch, anyway. Actually, yes, I was a criminal. That’s what you probably thought. *Ah*, your face tells me I got it right. Don’t pretend like it’s not true, and don’t pretend to even pity me. Of course, I’m still not as scummy as you,” she continued.

“…”

“Who cares? I’m just being honest since this is the last. It wasn’t all that different on Earth. I don’t know what others think of Lee Ji-Hye, but I wanted to climb the ranks. It’s not all that different now, but I wanted to keep climbing.

"Based on my standards, I went up to a pretty good position. However, it looks like there’s no end to my greed. The more I climb, the higher I want to go,” she said.

“…”

“It's either I don’t know the feeling of satisfaction, or I’ve always been crazy. I tried my best not to cross the line, but people probably think that what I've been doing is dirty work. Well, it doesn’t matter what other people think because I’m proud of myself. I thought I could climb higher, and I actually saw a path,” she explained.

“…”

“I sided with the right people and had a lot of cards up my sleeve. I had confidence as well, but that must’ve not been enough,” she added.

“…”

“I guess the higher-ups didn't want that. They must’ve thought that I wasn’t worthy of that position. I suddenly realized it. *Ah*, the reason I was able to get to this position

is because those bastards had allowed me to be in this position.

"Of course, I have no intention of looking down on my own abilities, but the only reason I was able to unleash them was that they had given me a stage to do so. I-I wasn't… allowed to be in that position… in the first place," she said.

"…"

"I had basically crossed the line. The higher-ups will see me as nothing but a small bitch who has flattered her way up to the upper echelons. Just like that, I lost everything. I lost everything in an instant in a ridiculous way. Can you believe it? I thought everything was mine, and I thought I already had it in my hands, but I lost everything in the blink of an eye," Lee Ji-Hye continued.

"…"

"I struggled and used the cards I had, but it was nothing but a drop in the ocean. The higher-ups probably saw me as nothing but a bitch running rampant. Damn it. Shit. I didn't want to accept it, but that was the reality. Shit, it makes me angry! *Cough, cough*," she complained.

"…"

"That's why I don't gamble, Oppa," she commented.

"…"

"I realized my place. People are born with different things. Some people get things without trying, and others get it the moment they're born. They boast about it as if they really deserved it. They boast about it when it's their environment that had given it to them. Do you know how disgusting it is to watch them act like that?" she questioned.

"…"

"That's why I chose you," she confessed.

"…"

"You didn't choose me. You could easily climb your way up to the upper echelon, but

you didn't boast about it, so I watched closely to see how things worked here, what I could do here, and how far I could go. Of course, the biggest reason was that I liked your face, but that sounds too snobbish and superficial, so forget it," she added.

"People will think that the former reason is more snobbish, noona," I commented.

"Really? I didn't know that. *Cough, cough*," she said.

"…"

"Anyway, that's how it is. That's how Lee Ji-Hye lived. I wasn't sure if that was the reason, but I laughed when I first arrived here. I laughed because I felt great," she said.

"…"

"When I first arrived at the continent, the tutorial dungeon, and when others were crying, I laughed for a while in the corner," she continued.

"…"

"Because the things I couldn't get on Earth were things I could get here. I thought the things I couldn't see on Earth were the things I could see here. I wonder—if I wasn't obsessed with this kind of thing, would I have been able to climb to where I am today?

"What do you think, oppa? Do you think the sight I saw at the summit had contributed a little to the person that I am today?" she questioned.

"No, you've always been a piece of shit obsessed with power. You were born that way," I replied.

"That's harsh. *Cough, cough, cough*. You're… *cough, cough*… a bigger piece of shit than me," she cursed.

"…"

"…"

"What about you? Do you have anything you want to say to me?" she asked.

“I don’t, noona,” I answered.

“I don’t think it’s worth prying… A man with a story and secrets is charming,” she said.

“You know you have bad taste in men, right?” I asked.

“You think I only have bad taste in men? *Cough, cough*,” she questioned.

“…”

“…”

“You haven’t even asked… if I’m okay. You scum,” she complained.

“Well, you obviously don’t look good,” I told her.

“Oh yeah? Maybe… this is how I die,” she said.

“…”

“I wanted to die a bit cooler than this, but as expected, people tend to talk a lot when it’s their turn to die. What about you, Oppa? Are you even sad?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“No,” I answered.

“Take off that mask. I’m getting tired of it. I think you’re crying right now. You’re choking right now, aren’t you?” she asked.

“I’m not crying,” I said.

“It’s my last wish, though… Can you take it off just this once?” she requested.

“…”

“Take it off… you bastard,” she cursed.

“…”

“…”

“I’m relieved,” she said.

“About what?” I asked.

“I was certain that you weren’t crying, so I was kind of nervous. I wondered if I had made an impact on you… if I’m even part of the list of Lee Ki-Young’s people. *Cough, cough.* I was nervous, but seeing you now… it seems that I had made the slightest impact possible.

"*Ah*, you can wear your mask again. *Cough, cough.* You look sexy, but I don’t really like your crying face,” she said.

“…”

“That pig that you care about so much. That pig… and… who was that girl again? *Ah*. T-That… Japanese woman… the blind woman… Kasugano something… My share is just as big as theirs or maybe more than theirs. I’m greedy, so I hope it’s more than them.

"Actually, maybe it’s not as much as that pig. I’m really tired of it. Do you know how long it’s been since that pig died? You’re still… No, forget it. I don’t want to talk about him. It’s my turn… If I keep talking about that pig, you’ll keep thinking about him. *Cough, cough*. Let’s talk about us. We had fun, right?” she asked.

“It was fun. Really,” I replied.

“We were a killer pair. Soulmates. It was really fun being able to run wild… *cough, cough,*” she said.

“…”

“It was fun. Who knew we’d achieve so much? I’m sure the bastards up there didn’t expect that. We destroyed the holy empire and the Republic. We completely wiped them out. We had also backstabbed those who considered themselves gods. I’m sure no one had expected the two of us to achieve this much. Of course, you did a lot more, but together? We're perfect,” she explained.

“That’s not true, noona,” I commented.

“…”

“It’s not because of me. It’s all thanks to you. If it weren’t for you, we wouldn’t have made it this far. You’re a genius, and you’re worthy of being in a higher position. Can you believe it?

"You screwed over the bastards up there when you had nothing. You're probably thinking that I have contributed a lot, but that’s not true. You actually contributed a lot more than me,” I told her.

“Even if they’re empty words… *Cough… cough…* I'm happy to hear that,” she said.

“They’re not empty words…”

“I’m happy… to hear you say that, oppa,” she interrupted.

“You’re the one who had suggested to accept me when I first came to the brigade, and you saved me many times. You know that you took the lead in more than half of our plans. I’m not talking sweet words just because you’re about to die. I’ll say it again. If it weren’t for you, I wouldn’t have made it this far,” I repeated.

“I’m happy. I’m really happy… that you… think that way. *Cough, cough*,” she confessed.

“…”

“…”

“It would’ve been better… if you said that… while I'm still alive and well. You scum…” she muttered.

“…”

“P-Put the mask on me. I want to die… while wearing my mask. This is how Lee Ji-Hye of the Murder Brigade should die,” she requested.

“…”

“Yeah, just like that. I’m sleepy, Ki-Young. It must really be time… *cough, cough*… for me to go. I-I don’t have any regrets. I really don’t. I-I was able to show… the kind of person I was,” she said.

“…”

“L-Love…” she stuttered.

“…”

“*Cough, cough, cough*… I… love you. My little brother… my soulmate. I-I’ll… see you in hell,” she mumbled.

“I love you too, noona. My soulmate,” I confessed.

“Our… usual kiss. *Cough, cough,*” she requested.

Kiss.

“W-W-What’s… your next plan?” she asked.

“Revenge and… complete destruction,” I answered.

“*Ha… ha…”*

“…”

“*Ha… hahaha… haha*,” she laughed.

“…”

“*Haha… cough, cough. Hahahaha*,” she continued laughing.

“…”

“*Hahahahahahahahaha!*”

“…”

“As expected… I’m…” she paused.

“…”

“Interested in men with ambition,” she confessed.

“…”

"…"

"Noona?" I called out.

"…"

"Noona?" I called out again.

"…"

Thump.

"…"

"I love you, noona."

---

1. Lee Ki-Young's POV ☜

CHAPTER 704
SOULMATE (3)

"Hang in there."

"…"

"We can start over."

'What?'

Whooooooooooosh.

I felt like I could hear something, and I suddenly felt like I had just woken up from a long dream. Aside from that, I saw various scenes flashing before my eyes. I couldn't take a proper look at them because they were passing by too fast, but one thing I was sure of was that I was crying like the time I saw Park Deok-Gu for the last time.

I couldn't stop crying.

'What the? Why am I… suddenly… '

I could tell that it was a scene from my past life, but I couldn't remember the details. It was all because I felt like I was getting sucked into the Dark World. It happened while Hee-Ra noona and Cherubim were talking. A strange pigeon appeared where Ji-Hye noona was located, and I happened to be watching her with my Telescope.

'I'll see you in hell, soulmate.'

I saw something strange right after I heard Lee Ji-Hye's voice.

'Shit.'

I looked at her again after seeing something strange. Actually, I was feeling dizzy, so I wasn't sure what I was looking at. I couldn't tell if what I was seeing right now was the Dark World of the first life or the current life, but I had to know Lee Ji-Hye's

current condition because there were too many things happening at the same time for me to determine what had happened in my past life.

However, I couldn't see properly because the Goddess' Mirror was covered in dust.

It was the same for the Telescope.

"Shit, shit, shit."

Is Lee Ji-Hye dead? She's not, right? Right? How did they get in?

'Dominions?'

I had never heard of Dominions having that kind of ability. There was no way Dominions could have entered that place unless he had the same skill as Jung Ha-Yan.

It was supposed to be incredibly difficult to break through the defense system around her. I didn't think something like this would actually happen, but when thinking about their abilities, it wasn't strange at all for them to be able to pull that off.

I couldn't help but think that I had put my guard down because I was confident that Lee Ji-Hye's situation room was impregnable. Dominions' pigeons could be rushing over here, and I had no idea what to do.

In addition, I couldn't just abandon everyone and run away.

"Ji-Hye noona! Can you hear me? Hello?" I called out.

She definitely couldn't hear me, but I unknowingly started shouting.

I felt like my hair was turning white due to stress. My body was telling me that I was getting extremely nervous. When I thought about what it would be like if Lee Ji-Hye was no more—no, if she had actually died… I went quiet without realizing it.

'Damn it. Shit.'

[Creating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[Ji-Hye noona. (0/1)]

[An Average-rank quest has been delivered to Lee Ji-Hye. No quest rewards were declared, so Lee Ji-Hye will not receive a reward.]

'Fuck… fuck!'

[Creating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[Can you hear me, Lee Ji-Hye? Answer me if you can. (0/1)]

[An Average-rank quest has been delivered to Lee Ji-Hye. No quest rewards were declared, so Lee Ji-Hye will not receive a reward.]

"Lee Ji-Hye! Lee Ji-Hye!" I shouted.

[Creating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[Answer me, you crazy bitch! Hurry up and answer me! (0/1)]

[An Average-rank quest has been delivered to Lee Ji-Hye. No quest rewards were declared, so Lee Ji-Hye will not receive a reward.]

"Lee Ji-Hye! I told you to answer me! You stupid bitch!" I cursed.

I slammed my fists on the table and kicked it out of anger, but I still didn't hear her voice.

'What should I do?'

What do you mean?

'What if Lee Ji-Hye is dead?'

It'd be the same as before.

'What do you mean it'll be the same as before?'

I suddenly felt hopeless. I felt both dizzy and lethargic. I kept crying, and I couldn't compose myself at all. I saw pigeons coming from everywhere. I told myself that I had to focus and give the next order, but all I heard was my madly pounding heart.

- What was that just now, darling? I'm waiting for my next order. Just now… I don't have to worry about it, right? Should I fight? Can I kill this bastard? I'm annoyed that he keeps talking bullshit.

- Sub Guild Master, the next…

- Father Lee Ki-Young, the enemies keep on coming in.

- Regarding the explosion just now… Chairman Lee Ki-Young. Chairman Lee Ki-Young?

"Answer me!" I yelled.

[Creating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[Ji-Hye noona. Don't die. Ji-Hye noona. (0/1)]

[An Average-rank quest has been delivered to Lee Ji-Hye. No quest rewards were declared, so Lee Ji-Hye will not receive a reward.]

'What should I do? What do I need to do in this situation?'

I felt my head cooling down rather than heating up, and it was cooling down so fast that I couldn't think about anything else. I couldn't help but laugh at myself for making such a stupid mistake. I wanted to think about the next plan while tapping my thigh quietly, but my head was cooling down to the point of becoming numb.

[Creating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[Lee Ji-Hye. (0/1)]

I felt like something huge was boring down on me from above. I was short of breath, and I couldn't pull myself together. I couldn't stop crying, and I felt like I was getting buried in my emotions. I felt like I was falling down into a dark place in the blink of an eye, and I knew that I had to compose myself soon.

'Fine, damn it. This should be satisfactory.'

This kind of reaction had to be enough to satisfy Lee Ji-Hye.

[Creating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[I know you're lying, so just get up. Noona, it's really not funny. Please don't do something like this. (0/1)]

[An Average-rank quest has been delivered to Lee Ji-Hye. No quest rewards were declared, so Lee Ji-Hye will not receive a reward.]

-…

'I'll see you in hell, soulmate, my ass. Stop talking nonsense. Seriously.'

[Creating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[I'm being serious. Stop it. Stop it with the old-fashioned, cheesy acting. Seriously. (0/1)]

[An Average-rank quest has been delivered to Lee Ji-Hye. No quest rewards were declared, so Lee Ji-Hye will not receive a reward.]

I couldn't help but laugh because it was absurd how she still hadn't replied to me.

'Lee Ji-Hye dies here?'

It was like Kim Hyun-Sung telling me that he was no longer shopping for bags. In fact, someone telling me that Ito Sota had always been a devout believer of the Goddess Benigoa was more convincing than this.

I laughed when Lee Ji-Hye calmly accepted her death because she was the same masked scum from her past life.

She was the most villainous villain who had plunged the world into complete hell. She was also a scummy person with a guaranteed escape route in every plan.

As if backstabbing the Outer God and the humans wasn't enough, she plunged everything into chaos.

Of course, the path Lee Ji-Hye had taken to grow and her goal was different from her past life and her current life, so even if there were a butterfly effect, the masked scum's nature would remain the same.

She was born to be a masked scum, and she wasn’t dumb enough to die to something like this.

I was sure of it.

‘She definitely has insurance.’

Just like how I kept secrets from her, I was sure she had her own secrets as well. I was a hundred percent sure of it. If Lee Ji-Hye had no insurance, then what she had done would have been in vain, and she wasn't the type of person to do something like that.

Honestly, I wasn’t worried.

‘You’re not that stupid, right?’

It was actually funny how I had fallen for her show in the first place. However, I couldn't help but criticize her for the impromptu. She should have done it properly. Now that I thought about it, perhaps the pigeon had managed to infiltrate the situation room because Lee Ji-Hye had disabled the defense system

Of course, I actually didn't think that it was the case, but I wasn't really aware of her plan, so I wanted her to just come back. Seriously, she should just stop with the nonsense and climb back up from hell.

‘Is this because of Jo Hye-Jin?’

It wouldn't be convincing. I recalled how she talked big about setting a proper example for Jo Hye-Jin, but she wasn’t dumb enough to intentionally create an opening in the defense system and let the enemy in. She wasn’t the type to be happy about showing the cards she had on her person. It was probably more convincing to say that Lee Ji-Hye had quickly written a script because Dominions could break through the defense system and infiltrate the situation room.

‘Wow, she couldn’t wait and wrote a script herself? I’m really surprised.’

“But why isn’t she coming out?” I questioned.

I wasn’t worried to begin with, but Lee Ji-Hye hadn't done anything else so far.

“Stop lying and come out. Stop making me feel nervous,” I said.

I still didn’t hear anything else.

“Hey! Damn it! Stop doing that! Seriously! Stop it! Noona!” I yelled.

The tiniest trace of anxiety was about to sway my heart when—

- *Whoo…*

—I heard a tiny voice.

- I wanted you to fall for it. You’re really scummy, oppa. I went this far, so couldn’t you have acted like you were a bit nervous?

- U-Unni?

- Yeon-Soo, it’s really commendable that you thought about taking the hit with your body, but you’re heavy. Can you get off me? Oppa. I’m telling you this in case you think I’m doing something suspicious, but I didn’t make any of this up. I was surprised as well. There’s no reason for me to make this up, so don’t be suspicious of me. You don’t think I’m like you, do you? By the way, these pigeons are interesting. I took into account a situation where they would break through the defense system, but who would have known that it would actually happen? I’m really curious about how they got in, but we can take our time with that later.

- Unni… W-What happened just now?

- What do you mean? I protected you just now.

- How did you…

- People like me have a lot of secrets because that’s more charming. Can you stand back a bit? Don’t stand too far since we need to prepare for battle.

- *Huh? Huh?* Unni…

- Humans are really interesting. Plans are bound to get messed up. Nothing in this world goes your way.

Lee Ji-Hye smiled.

- Hey, lady. I don't know why you're here, but you made a mistake.

- Is that right?

The way the woman sat arrogantly on the chair made her look like a high-ranking noble.

I smiled when I saw her looking down at Dominions.

- I usually don't act like this, but when you live in a harsh world, something like this is bound to happen. Women like me usually act like this. I assumed the worst and expected a slip-up, so I had no choice but to be prepared for it. It felt like power was something I could never get, but I'm not really the type to participate on battlefields, so I wasn't really too worried about power. However, I'm really glad that I got myself insurance. Of course, rolling the dice like what you had done isn't so bad either, Oppa.

- Unni…

Lee Ji-Hye definitely looked like a member of the upper echelon. At a glance, she looked like she was full of herself.

I understood her feelings *slightly*. When she expressed her desire to keep on climbing higher heights, I felt the same thing as her. She was enjoying this moment, and moments like this had to be the reason she was obsessed with power.

Lee Ji-Hye had turned the pigeon, who could be considered a god, into a scum who was kissing her feet.

At least, that was what her gaze was telling me. She was mocking this great being with a gaze that said, *"You can't look at me with that face," "You'll be crawling on the ground soon,"* and *"Let's see if you'll look at me the same way in a few minutes."*

'She has guts.'

Just like that, the masked villain of the past life started talking.

- You can come out, Lonovera.

I didn’t want to say this myself, but…

- As you wish, my small and cute master.

She really looked like scum.

- Want to lick my shoes? I might forgive you if you do.

CHAPTER 705
SOULMATE (4)

“Hey, hey! Are you serious?” I shouted.

- Kneel.

“Ji-Hye noona! I believed in you, damn it!” I yelled.

- You must be having a hard time hearing me.

“When did you sign a contract with Lonovera?” I questioned.

I wasn’t sure how they got into a contract, but I was convinced that she had met some sort of condition because Lonovera could visit Lee Ji-Hye in her dreams.

It had to have happened when Benigoa and Belial were busy arguing with each other.

At the time, Lonovera was just one of the 27th Legion's high priests, but the succubus was now a proud member of the 72 Demon Lords. Even if Lee Ji-Hye had offered something that would allow Lonovera to profit greatly from it, a contract between them would still be impossible because Lonovera's position was too high.

In other words, the two had to have gotten into a contract with each other before Lonovera became one of the 72 Demon Lords.

‘She must’ve thought a lot about this.’

Lonovera was strong, but I wasn't happy about the fact that Lee Ji-Hye had decided to get into a contract with the former just because she was at a disadvantage. I was also convinced that Lonovera was cooking up some kind of scheme, and that was why she convinced Lee Ji-Hye to get into a contract with her.

Lee Ji-Hye then decided to throw the dice.

I wasn’t sure why Ji-Hye noona had gotten into a contract with her, but Lonovera

proved her worth. In addition to becoming a demon lord, she was also the subject of Lucifer's affection.

It was like buying a random coin for fun and seeing it go to the moon a few years later.

'I'm sure she's really happy.'

The demons also knew that Lee Ji-Hye had a nauseating and disgusting soul. The only burning question I had in mind was how she managed to amass the necessary mana to get into a contract in the first place.

I didn't want to imagine this, but there might be a black magic factory maintaining Lee Ji-Hye's contract with Lonovera somewhere on the outskirts of the continent.

Honestly, I didn't want to look into it because the process wasn't important here—the important part was the result, and the result was that Lee Ji-Hye had gotten into a contract with Lonovera Coin, which was now on the moon.

BOOM!

The battle had already started in the small room.

Ha Yeon-Soo looked around like a sea turtle that had seen a desert for the first time, but she knew exactly what she had to do. Lonovera standing next to Lee Ji-Hye swung her arms with a grin, causing a massive beam of black magic to fly toward Dominions.

- I'm surprised you got into a contract with a demon, but it also doesn't seem like a legitimate contract. Where are the humans who suffered in your place in order to maintain that contract?

- Oh my, that's rude. Someone might misunderstand and think that I'm running a black magic factory or something. You don't have to worry so much. I'm the type of boss who treats her workers well. I provide great benefits, and I give them a comfortable life, so you don't have to worry… I make sure our workers are working in the best working environment possible.

- Disgusting human.

- My workers have to work overtime, and it's all because of you. I have to pay them for their overtime, you know? How about you? Are you sure you're getting paid to work overtime? You should think about working for me. I'm confident that I can treat you better than your boss in more ways than one.

- I won't answer that. As expected, you're a human that needs to disappear. Do you know how dangerous it is to summon a demon to this continent?

- In my eyes, pigeons and demons are the same. It's all about how you use them. Hey, don't look at me like that. I'm not calling you a weapon, Lonovera. I'm simply giving her an example, but I was tempted for a moment… Dominions. You're aware that your idea is ridiculous, right? All humans deserve to live with their own free will.

'Look at her changing her mind.'

- As someone standing on the side of justice, I can't accept your idea. *Hahahaha!* Human dignity! You guys are ruling that out. We're justice, and you guys are evil. Actually, I'm just. Those who reign supreme are just. You came here because you already knew that.

- Don't associate me with a disgusting human like—

- Everyone is entitled to their own opinions.

- I'll kill you and liberate all the humans that are suffering beneath you!

- I told you that my workers have great benefits. You're the real demon here. If I die, my workers will become unemployed. Looks like I have no choice but to fight. I want to protect my workers' families, after all.

It was the fight between transcendents, and Ha Yeon-Soo was too weak to get involved in that fight, even though she was a tier-one adventurer.

Dominions was trying to kill Lee Ji-Hye by ignoring Lonovera, but there was no way things would go that way.

Lonovera wasn't particularly great at combat, and I was sure that she was suffering under some kind of penalty because she had forced her way here. However, Lonovera was now a demon lord. Of course, her rank was low, but she was still no different from a god, especially if we took her grade into account.

‘Her workers lack skills. It feels like they’ve been downgraded, but… ’

She could definitely fight Dominions. It also became obvious who had the upper hand in this fight. Lonovera was swinging her claws or using her powers to corner Dominions.

Dominions had no choice but to keep on blocking Lonovera's attacks.

Lonovera would stop from time to time, like a fuse blowing out.

The cooldown time was extremely short, but it seemed like Lonovera was trying to invade Dominions' mind.

- Even if I see dirty things, I won’t be swayed.

- We’ll see about that, pigeon.

- Keep that dirty mouth closed, you demon.

‘It seems like they’re even putting their emotions into this.’

The fight was so fierce that I couldn’t describe it with words. I wanted to keep watching the fight, but I couldn’t in the current situation.

- I think they’re coming here as well. You can handle it, right, Oppa?

The situation room was completely destroyed, which meant that I had to pick up the slack.

‘This… has become a bit complicated.’

Cha Hee-Ra was struggling to maintain her sanity because her opponent was Cherubim, but the castle defense was progressing smoothly.

The problem was that the troops were being focused in the area where Dominions and Lonovera were fighting. It seemed like the pigeons were gathering in that area after hearing the news that a human with a disgusting soul had appeared with a demon.

Geographically, it was an important base, so I couldn’t leave it alone. The part that

comforted me was that it was the base where the Red Mercenary Guild was the main force.

Even a few members of the Lee Ji-Hye division were there.

'I've seen all of them before.'

I was confident that they'd be able to handle the current situation.

And that was when Choi Young-Ki of the Red Mercenary Guild appeared…

"Mr. Young-Ki, can you hear me?" I asked.

- Yes, I can hear you, Mr. Lee Ki-Young.

"I'm sure you're already aware, but there's an ongoing issue in the situation room over there. Since Ji-Hye noona can't give orders right now, I'll make sure that you'll be able to control the battlefield in the meantime. Please follow the manual until a special issue comes up. The enemy troops are approaching, so I'll send you reinforcements. For now, just hold out and employ the battle of attrition strategy," I instructed.

- Understood, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. If you don't mind me asking, can you tell me the Mercenary Queen's current condition?

'Ah, that?'

- I thought you'd at least understand me, crimson beast.

- Bullshit.

I couldn't tell him that things were going well.

A mixture of red and blue darted around the battlefield, and I couldn't even begin to describe this scene to him. In addition, the mass-produced pigeons and the allied forces had long left the battlefield where Cha Hee-Ra was located.

"She's currently fighting an angel named Cherubim, and the situation doesn't look that bad. I'm keeping an eye out, so don't worry," I answered.

- Please take care of her.

“I should be the one asking you that. Please contact me as soon as you find something strange. I’m currently busy with a lot of things,” I reminded him.

- Okay. Please don’t overdo it. Your health—

“Yes, yes,” I interrupted him.

Cha Hee-Ra versus Cherubim…

Lee Ji-Hye versus Dominions…

‘Does that mean we only need to worry about the remaining two?’

Dominions was capable of instantaneous movement, so I didn't consider him bound.

Meanwhile, Cherubim was bound because Cha Hee-Ra would definitely not let him go. It would be difficult for him to escape Cha Hee-Ra's clutches, so I could say that the overall situation wasn't so bad.

‘Actually, is this even considered bad?’

I was happy that an unexpected force was keeping one of the Four Angels busy, but if I were to be straightforward, Lee Ji-Hye shone brightly as the controller of the battlefield, so it would have been better if she were controlling the battlefield rather than fighting.

I could create cards that could stop the Four Angels, but no one could replace Lee Ji-Hye’s ability to control the battlefield. Choi Young-Ki of the Red Mercenary Guild could fulfill that role temporarily, but his control wasn't that huge.

In addition, I really disliked the fact that I had temporarily lost my partner.

‘This is a big disadvantage.’

Lee Ji-Hye’s absence was huge. I wasn’t perfect, and two heads were better than one. I felt pressured whenever I made decisions without Lee Ji-Hye. She understood me, and she knew exactly what I wanted, so we worked really well.

Without her, I would have to discuss tactical issues and have a brief meeting about several big decisions with the others.

'That means I need to proceed without Ji-Hye noona's opinion.'

An assumption suddenly popped into my head.

We weren't the ones holding them back.

It could be the other way around.

"These bastards definitely have a control tower," I said.

'It's also true that they remember the past life.'

If they had really gotten backstabbed by the masked scums, they might determine that the masked duo was the biggest obstacle in their past lives. In other words, separating the two would be their top priority.

'Is separating the two masked scums part of their plan?'

It seemed masked scum Jin Cheong's karma would end up hurting me.

'I do want to see the face of my opponent.'

I couldn't see them right now, but they were great.

I was frustrated because I didn't know the identity of the controller behind these troops, but if I could at least see their faces, I could figure out what they were thinking. I tried to look for the enemy's control tower using the Telescope, but I couldn't see anything.

I didn't think that I would be able to find their location that easily, but I wasn't making more progress than I originally thought.

'They've also taken their time learning all this… '

I could feel it based on how they were moving their troops.

'Where can I get more troops?'

The Red Mercenary Guild needed reinforcements, and I knew I had to support them with more troops, but it was up to me to decide where I was going to pull the troops from to support the Red Mercenary Guild.

And that was when I saw the enemy troops moving at the frontline nearby. Their intention was obvious. The moment I send additional troops to the Red Mercenary Guild, they'd send additional troops to the weaker frontline.

Basically, it was a battle of numbers, and it felt like they wanted to have a childish battle of ratios. The way it was carried out was so clean that they reminded me of Ji-Hye noona.

"This is interesting. I knew you guys didn't need additional troops…" I mumbled.

I never expected the Outer Force and angels to have a high-level military strategy.

It would have been different if I had known from the beginning that they were capable of employing such a high-level strategy. The masked scum duo were in charge of their control tower in their past life, so there was no way they could use the same tactics as the masked scum duo.

'One of the Four Angels… '

I got up from my seat while tapping my thigh. I was looking down at the model of the battlefield spread out on the huge desk. I moved the pieces slowly and saw the troops moving as well.

The fact that the pieces were moving in real time meant that my strategy was being delivered properly. I threw the troops to test the waters, and their movements changed almost immediately.

'That's some fast reaction. Wait, are they looking down on me?'

It felt as if the angels knew that I was just testing the waters. Actually, it wasn't the only thing.

"*Ha…*"

The pigeons started moving in an orderly manner.

It was clear that their actual goal was to separate Lee Ji-Hye and me.

The enemy targeted the fourteen bases the allied forces considered as main bases. I was convinced that even a child could deduce that those bases were important, and despite the traps, the pigeons were pushing forward toward them with spears in hand.

“What the heck?”

I moved a few more pieces, but… the pigeons blocked them before I could make them move. The control tower of the enemy troops seemed capable of reading my mind. It hurt my pride to say this, but they were quite skilled.

‘It’s perfect.’

To conquer this battlefield, I probably would have done the same thing as them.

I knew it wasn’t the best example, but it felt like I was playing chess with my reflection.

“Who is this… bastard?” I questioned.

I noticed a pigeon getting closer from afar. I didn’t know what the pigeon was trying to do, but I had a feeling that I could figure it out. I would have made the same decision if I were in their position because it was the best way to turn a chaotic battlefield even more chaotic.

‘Tactical Kim Hyun-Sung?’

“Is it really him?”

The enemy’s control tower used the Four Angels to imitate tactical Kim Hyun-Sung.

“They’re copying him?”

It felt like their operation was almost perfect.

CHAPTER 706
SOULMATE (5)

Their intentions were clear.

'A one-man tactical nuke.'

Well, that would happen if I somehow became an idiot. Right now, the pigeons had to create an opening in this blocked-off battlefield. Their wings were completely sealed, and the large castle walls were preventing their allies from reinforcing them.

There was a minimum requirement that had to be fulfilled before one could conduct a siege, and the fact that they had been isolated from their allies meant that they were being squeezed into a pinch.

They were the attacks here, but…

'Why does it seem like they're the ones getting surrounded?'

It made sense now that I thought about it, as the castle walls were built in a way that would surround the northern region. We ran multiple simulations before proceeding with the construction, and I also had many meetings with professionals to ensure that the allied forces would have an advantage during the fight.

And that was how the advanced base and castle walls were built…

Even if the enemies managed to break through the first castle wall, the advanced bases were there to stop them. I had even made sure that Jung Ha-Yan's spells could affect the entire battlefield, so the pigeons had to be frustrated at the fact that they could no longer fly.

The named heroes were here to bring variables to such a battlefield, but there was a limit to how much they could affect the battlefield. Fortunately, even if the enemy had a named hero capable of breaking through our defenses, we also had a named hero capable of countering them.

'Even if that's not the case… '

It was difficult to find a hero capable of truly affecting the battlefield. The conditions were strict. The hero in question had to be nimble so they could move freely around the battlefield, and they needed enough experience to make decisions for themselves.

An overwhelming amount of power was required for them to be employed as a one-man tactical nuke. They had to be open-minded, and they needed a brain capable of making quick decisions, calmness to deal with unexpected variables, and a good-looking face befitting a protagonist. Well, good looks didn't really matter, but anyway, Kim Hyun-Sung was the only individual here who had all those traits.

Until I saw a certain pigeon wreaking havoc on the battlefield…

- *Aaaaaaaack!*

- Enemy Named has appeared! We need reinforcements. Reinforcements!

- Constrict them! Stop them from flying high!

- *Aaaahhhh!*

- Shit! Where? Where are they?!

- B-Behind. Dodge. Dodge, damn it!

- They're alone anyway. The allied Named will arrive here soon. Defend yourself with your spells. We'll hold out as much as we can. I want the tanks to get in the front and protect the priests at all costs. They're aiming for the backline. Don't let them waste your energy.

- Left!

- Shit!

- Priest! Priest! O-Over here!

- W-What's going on? Shit… What is this?!

- You monster! Monster! *Cough!*

- Die! Die…

The pigeon was so fast that my eyes couldn't follow them. They were also skilled in close combat quarters. An ordinary soldier could definitely keep up with them, but even if they could keep up with this pigeon, I wasn't sure if they were strong enough to defeat the pigeon because there was a limit to human vision.

It was especially true when the allies were gathered in one area. The allied troops would block each other's vision, and they would also find it difficult to suppress the pigeon if they couldn't even see them in the first place.

The enemy's control tower was smart to the point that they had used our allied troops as shields, and they were guiding the pigeon on where they needed to go. To make things worse, it was in the direction that bothered me the most.

We couldn't shoot arrows or use magic. In other words, a wolf had been unleashed among the flock of sheep. The battlefield instantly became chaotic, and it was natural for us to stop defending the castle walls.

The pigeon's first goal was to kill the on-site commanders, and they were doing an amazing job carrying out their mission. Over fifteen commanders lost their lives in a short period of time, and those commanders could be considered Named heroes.

Of course, they were so weak compared to the real Named heroes that I felt bad about comparing the two. However, they weren't dumb enough not to fight against their assailant. They were proud of their abilities, and they had actually been acknowledged for their skills, which was why they were in their current position.

'But still, they were killed so easily.'

I noticed that the flock of sheep on top of the castle walls was confused.

They had no idea what was going on, and they also had no idea what the issue was. All they could see was the allied troops getting slaughtered; they couldn't even hear the on-site commanders anymore.

To make things worse, the pigeons were climbing up the walls.

I was sure there was nothing more frightening than seeing those pigeons climb in the eyes of the people on top of the walls.

'This is bad.'

I had to calm the battlefield down. At this rate, a hole would appear in the dam. Once a hole was made, it would grow exponentially until it was impossible to fix it. I cast my gaze upon the pigeon and bit my lip when I saw the pigeon move.

The pigeon was a male figure with flowing silver hair, which had become the symbol of demons. His expression was conflicted, but he swung his sword crazily around him.

He wasn't as good-looking as Kim Hyun-Sung, but he was still good-looking, and he had the typical face of a chosen warrior in novels. He was really fast, and what stood out to me the most was that his movement looked extremely familiar.

'This isn't his first time being used as a one-man tactical nuke. Since when?'

The Outer God and pigeons were wandering around dimensions…

'The first life?'

It was possible that he had experienced being a one-man tactical nuke in his past life.

Of course, this was just an assumption, but I had a feeling that it was the case.

"Thronus?"

The masked scum of the past life had to have determined that he was the right angel to use as a one-man tactical nuke, and the role was perfect for him.

This was a bit of an exaggeration, but it felt like he had moved that way hundreds or thousands of times now. He understood the control tower's commands, and he was completely aware of his role. I was sure that he…

"Learned that from his past life," I said.

I was curious about Thronus and the controller at the control tower. The masked scum no longer existed because he was already dead. How was I supposed to accept

the fact that Thronus was being used so naturally by that controller?

'Could it be that one of the angels had learned it from the masked scum in the first life? Or did the masked scum come back from hell?'

Regardless, the top priority was to stop Thronus. Should I stop him by dispatching Tactical Kim Hyun-Sung? Or would it be better to keep him hidden a little longer?

'He'll end up being a waste if I don't use him.'

Right now, I had to make him appear on the battlefield. I looked at Kim Hyun-Sung using the Telescope, and I saw him sitting on the castle wall. I did recall the pouty Kim Hyun-Sung yelling, *"Fuck you,"* but he looked like he was in good condition.

'Will this be okay?'

Wasn't he mentally ill? He'd be able to carry out his mission properly, right?

He seemed a bit unmotivated, but he looked laid-back.

If he thought having mixed feelings and participating in battle were completely different things, I would send him to the battlefield, but I was kind of worried because he seemed out of it. Our precious Hyun-Sung had to face the Outer God, and I was worried about him getting hurt before the final battle. Normally, I wouldn't worry about it, but the silver-haired demon's movements were just too impressive to ignore.

Just then, I saw Kim Hyun-Sung spreading his wings. He started moving while staring quietly at Thronus. I recalled ordering him to be on stand-by until I gave him another order.

I wondered if Kim Hyun-Sung and I were finally on the same page, but it didn't take long for me to realize that I was mistaken.

'This bastard… '

He had decided to do whatever he wanted.

"Mr. Hyun-Sung?" I said.

- I'll go and stop him.

"Okay, fine. Then I'll keep giving you instructions, so…"

- You don't need to do that, Mr. Ki-Young.

'I knew he would do this. This makes me feel nervous.'

- I've fought him before, and I can kill him with my own hands.

'Ah, that was him? But I think he's kind of different now… There's someone else giving him orders, Hyun-Sung.'

- I don't want to burden you, Mr. Ki-Young.

'It'll burden me even more if you get hurt.'

- I know what you're worried about, but you don't have to worry too much. I've… become stronger as well. Looking out for me while looking at other parts of the battlefield is… Yes, it's too burdensome for you, Mr. Ki-Young.

"No, that's…"

- Didn't you say you've trusted me to help you carry the burdens? I can't burden you, let alone give you more burdens to carry. Please…

'No, Hyun-Sung. I feel like you're going to lose. I feel uneasy for some reason.'

It would be different if it were just Thronus, but the figure above him bothered me.

- I'm going to disconnect for a moment. I'll be back, Mr. Ki-Young.

"W-Wait!" I shouted.

Click.

He disconnected the call. Obviously, I could still send a message to Kim Hyun-Sung, but I was perplexed by his determination.

'What the hell, man? Did you just ignore me?'

I knew he was going through puberty, but it was more serious than I thought. I actually felt like laughing because it was so absurd. However, it was exactly because it was so absurd that I couldn't laugh at it.

'Should I just watch for now?'

How about making a decision after seeing if he could actually handle Thronus by himself?

'Wait, should I even be worried about him? He's Kim Hyun-Sung, our lovely regressor. He said he successfully took down Thronus in his past life.'

Our Hyun-Sung had become extremely strong after he got his wings.

'I'll watch for now.'

Kim Hyun-Sung's black wings started flapping as soon as I nodded. Unlike me, who was like a baby bird that couldn't fly properly, he had already gotten used to his wings.

A dark light instantly crossed the sky, and a large magic circle surrounded him.

It gave me goosebumps because it looked like it could cut down a god with a single strike.

I'd expect nothing less from our regressor… was what I thought, but as the cheering grew louder, it became harder to watch Kim Hyun-Sung. The allied forces cheered because they knew Kim Hyun-Sung was coming, and Thronus also knew he was coming for him. He expected it. Thronus wielded a sword that looked twice as long as an ordinary sword, and he looked up at the sky.

'I wonder if Kim Hyun-Sung is aware that Thronus remembers his past life.'

I should probably tell him, right? Actually, Kim Hyun-Sung might find out on his own. I was sure they'd have some kind of conversation because this was the first time they were seeing each other after their last battle a long time ago.

As expected, the silver-haired demon started talking.

For a moment, I thought he was cold-hearted, but I saw him frowning as soon as he

saw Kim Hyun-Sung. His hands were shaking, and he grabbed his head as if he were in disbelief. Was he expressing his anger towards Doom Hyun-Sung, who had gotten into a contract with Lucifer? My assumption was probably right because when that pigeon saw Kim Hyun-Sung in his past life, Kim Hyun-Sung was an upright person.

However, the words I heard completely went beyond my expectations.

- It was you.

-…

- You were the reason behind it. When did you get into a contract with a demon?

-…

- Was it right before this? Did he… Did he also fall for your tricks? Actually, there's no need to ask. There's no evidence as clear as your appearance. I thought something was off. There's no way he would make that kind of decision. All of my other comrades said that we'd been betrayed, but I knew I wasn't wrong. T-There's no way he would betray us. There's no way the one who understood me the most and my precious friend would die after betraying me. I knew I was right.

- What do you…

- Answer me! Kim Hyun-Sung! You dirty deceiver! I asked if you're the one who had tainted him?!

'What kind of bullshit is this bastard spouting? Who was the one who understood you the most and was your precious friend?'

CHAPTER 707
SOULMATE (6)

The first thing I saw was Kim Hyun-Sung's confused face. He looked as if he couldn't understand the bullshit Thronus was talking about. I would have reacted the same as him.

'Taint? Friend? One who understands him the most? Contract with a demon?'

I had no idea what he was talking about because Kim Hyun-Sung had never gotten into a contract with a demon in his past life. It was in this life that he had gotten into a contract with Lucifer, and if it weren't for the Rafael incident, the contract wouldn't have happened. He had an upright spirit, and his spirit had always been like that.

'I think Thronus has misunderstood something here.'

I didn't know the details, but it seemed like he had truly misunderstood Kim Hyun-Sung.

Of course, I was sure that information was something he didn't need to listen to.

How could he stand there and listen to Thronus' nonsense? He was an enemy, and I was sure he looked nothing more than a crazy bastard saying nonsense.

One thing I could say with certainty was that Kim Hyun-Sung was aware of the fact that they could still remember him because he was frowning.

Kim Hyun-Sung started speaking cautiously. It didn't seem like they were going to have a long conversation, but after seeing the bastard on the opposite side of him in his past life, numerous thoughts had to have popped into his head.

- Do you remember me, Thronus?

I was sure that was pretty much the only conversation they'd have.

'You look really charismatic.'

- If I say yes, what are you going to do? You dirty deceiver.

- It won't change what I need to do. I'm going to kill you just like I did before.

'Our Hyun-Sung is cold-hearted. Were you like this in your past life?'

- I remember everything. I didn't die, and I've been alive all this time, you dirty deceiver. Answer my question. Kim Hyun-Sung. Where is he?

-…

- I asked you where he is!

Kim Hyun-Sung's expression looked similar to when he looked at Rafael, but it was kind of different. They were looking at each other as if they were archenemies, and I was sure everything was completely silent between them.

The war in the first life lasted a really long time. I didn't have to see for myself that every time a fight broke out, they were at the center of each formation, and they aimed their swords at each other. In the end, Kim Hyun-Sung was the victor, but I could guarantee that a lot happened during that process.

'Is it fair to say that they just have a bad relationship?'

-…

- Don't act like you don't know! You puppet of disgusting demons! Your black wings are telling me everything. It was you. You were the main culprit!

- You've become an idiot.

Kim Hyun-Sung was right. Thronus was really acting like an idiot.

- Shut up, Seraphim.

- What?

- I said shut up, Seraphim.

-…

- We need to think about this again, Seraphim. I'm sure this deceiver looks dirty even in your eyes… N-No. You're wrong, Seraphim. *He* believed in us, so we must believe in him. He's probably in pain, or he's probably in a horrible situation right now. You still don't think that he had betrayed us, do you? How could you think that after seeing this deceiver…

-…

'Where the hell did this crazy bastard come from…?'

It was ridiculous how Thronus was now talking to himself. After seeing his gaze, I knew he wasn't in his right mind. He looked like a drunkard.

- How could you say something like that, Seraphim?! You were the one who said that you wanted to be with *him*. You followed *him* everywhere, so how could you… how… could you say something like that…

It seemed Thronus was talking to a pigeon named Seraphim, but…

'Is Seraphim the controller?'

I couldn't really focus because the atmosphere was becoming more and more hostile.

- You're the one who's crazy, Seraphim. You're the one who hasn't accepted things the way they are! If you speak again…

'What's wrong with him? I'm scared. You're going to protect me, right, Hyun-Sung?'

- If you won't do it… I'll get it back on my own. By myself!

The crazy pigeon pointed his sword toward Kim Hyun-Sung and charged. Kim Hyun-Sung seemed a bit nervous when Thronus was suddenly having a seizure as if he had forgotten to take his medication, so he unsheathed his sword. I saw silver and black silhouettes pointing their swords at each other.

- Kim Hyun-Sung!

- Thronus!

Like some shonen manga, they shouted each other's names as their swords clashed. I

wanted to take a picture of this scene, but I had to grab my head at the sudden change in the scene.

Booooooooooooom!

Right after I heard the explosion and the light started spreading, I became confused.

'Again?'

Like the time I saw Lee Ji-Hye's last memory, I felt like I was being sucked away somewhere. The scenery before me changed in the blink of an eye. It lasted but a brief moment, but it felt like an eternity. When that feeling disappeared, I found myself standing on a quiet battlefield. The figure sitting on the ruined and collapsed building was a masked man and Thronus. This was the memory of Thronus' first life.

'What more is there to see that I need to watch this again?'

I started getting a headache, but the problem was that I couldn't stop watching it. The panorama kept playing in my mind.

"Why… did you choose me?" Thronus asked.

"I wouldn't really call it a choice. It's just…"

"You know that's not what I'm asking. What I want to know is why you decided to use me. I don't have overwhelming powers like Seraphim or Cherubim. I became powerful because I was lucky, but I'm not as smart as Dominions. All I have are my fast wings," Thronus said.

"…"

"I'm weak. I still don't like killing humans, and I feel the same about war. We have big goals, but destruction and violence don't fit us. Of course, I know that we have no choice," he said.

"…"

"I'm also aware that this is something we must achieve no matter what because it's the reason behind our birth. However, a part of me finds it burdensome, and it's something—" he paused.

“You’re not weak, Thronus,” the masked man interrupted.

“No… I’m…”

“You’re not weak. I’m sure you can become stronger than Cherubim—no, stronger than Seraphim,” he continued.

“But…”

“Why do you love humans?” he asked.

“We’re made to love all things…”

“I’m asking why you cherish humans so much,” he questioned.

“…”

“…”

“I-I have never thought about it…” Thronus answered.

“I see.”

“The star…” Thronus said.

“What?”

“Humans are like those stars in the night sky." Thronus continued. For a moment, I thought Thronus was being cheesy, but the alcoholic pigeon looked serious.

‘What the hell is this?’

I was amazed that he was able to say such words with such sincerity. He continued talking, and I felt like looking away because his words were so cringey.

“…”

“Yeah, I think that description fits well. Humans are the stars in the night sky. They’re shining. I can’t really explain it since I’m not good with words, but they’re always shining. Humanity's potential is limitless. They light up the canvas in different ways.

Haha. Of course, that light dies out sometimes, and a really bright light will make others look at other stars, but even that is beautiful," Thronus explained.

"…"

"All of that is beautiful," he added.

"I see."

"I've never seen stars shine the same way. Their personalities are beautiful, too. Some shine bright, and others are dimmer than others. Each one shines in a different light, but they all light up the night sky. Yeah. I believe their personalities are beautiful. I think the ability to shine on their own is amazing. I think it's amazing that they can envision great possibilities. I believe their very existence is beautiful," he continued.

"…"

"Was my answer weird?" he asked.

"No, I believe it fits you very well, Thronus. I can't help but laugh at how fitting it is," the masked man answered.

"Are you ridiculing—"

"That's not it at all. I would never ridicule you. You're the one who asked me why I chose you," the masked man answered.

"That's true," Thronus said.

"That's…" the masked man trailed off.

"That's?" Thronus repeated.

"That's because you resemble humans." The masked man continued.

"…"

"I'm not saying it to anger you. It's exactly like you explained earlier. To me, you're like one of the stars shining in the night sky. Humans are weak, and I know this very

well because I'm a human," the masked man said.

"…"

"That's why I'm worried. I feel distressed and constantly thinking about problems. I question whether this is right or wrong. Sometimes humans make the right decision, and sometimes they make the wrong decision, but it's because of that…" he paused.

"…"

"…they can shine," the masked man said.

"…"

"They're always preparing for the next thing because they're imperfect beings; they make mistakes and fall into agony. Some want to undo what has already happened, while others just don't want to repeat the same mistake. That's why they can shine," he said.

"Is that right?" Thronus asked.

"In that sense… I think you resemble them. You contemplate and regret just like humans do. You worry and get lost deep in your thoughts over trivial things. Just like how you asked me the question earlier.

"I would always think this way every time you ask me these kinds of questions. You can shine, become stronger, grow more, and soar higher than the other angels. That's the reason I chose you, Thronus. In the end, you're not weak. Among the angels I've seen, you're actually the strongest," I explained.

"I-I'm flattered. Your words… are making me feel embarrassed," Thronus stuttered.

"I'm speaking the truth, Thronus," the masked man said.

"You're embarrassing me," he repeated.

"…"

"Human, why do you not take off your mask?" Thronus asked.

“It’s such an ugly face that I’m embarrassed to show it to others. I told you before, didn’t I? I have no reason to take off my mask,” the masked man replied.

“But…”

Thronus extended his hand out toward the masked man’s mask, and the masked scum didn’t bother moving away. He was probably thinking that Thronus wouldn't be able to remove his mask. As expected, the silver-haired pigeon hesitated and put his hand down.

Thronus got up from his seat and looked at the masked man.

The masked man started talking, “The stars in the night sky. They've become such a beautiful sight after I heard what you said.”

‘This scummy bastard… Look at him saying those sweet words.’

“It’d be nice if we can look at it together next time,” the masked man said.

I had seen this scene many times from somewhere.

“Yeah, that would be nice. I really mean it,” Thronus said.

“…”

“The starry night… Yeah, let’s look at it together again,” Thronus added.

I couldn’t really remember it, though.

CHAPTER 708
SOULMATE (7)

I heard an ear-piercing noise.

'Shit, what is that?'

I didn't know why it kept showing me the backstory of the masked scum in his past life. I became confused because it felt like my head was spinning. I opened my eyes wide and looked at Kim Hyun-Sung and Thronus, but it felt like both scenes had overlapped.

Kim Hyun-Sung continued to swing his sword while the alcoholic pigeon kept blocking his attacks. There were explosions in all directions, and the terrain was in real-time. The problem was that I couldn't differentiate what I was seeing.

'What is this? Is this the first or current life?'

Or…

'I think it was changed to the first life just now. Is it the current life again?'

It felt like I was staring at a kaleidoscope of scenes, and I couldn't tell which scene I was staring at. Was I staring at the first life or the current life? Were the two scenes the same? They also fought each other in the first life. The only difference was Kim Hyun-Sung's wings, but even his wings seemed to have become hazy, so I couldn't really say much about it.

However, one thing was for sure—they were strong.

'They're strong.'

Kim Hyun-Sung was strong in his past life.

'How is that possible?'

Kim Hyun-Sung showed similar movements even before he had accepted Lucifer's power, but he had gotten faster.

A very well-made sword—that was how I could describe the past Kim Hyun-Sung. Even without the bulky wings and black magic, he faced one of the Four Angels with confidence. The alcoholic pigeon was just as powerful as him.

'Thronus is the weakest out of the Four Angels?'

No way. It didn't seem like that to me. He was strong. His swordsmanship was comparable to Kim Hyun-Sung. Actually, I felt like he was more skilled. Thronus was at his peak since he could freely handle his massive sword, which I thought would be difficult to wield at that level. He was definitely different from the other angels. He was different from Cherubim, who was fighting Cha Hee-Ra, and Dominions, who was fighting Lee Ji-Hye.

Thronus was definitely using human techniques, and since he had never learned it from anyone, he had probably learned it all by himself. Thronus adored humans, so he probably learned it discreetly through experience and by watching them. He had probably spent many years doing that until he became an expert at it.

The view of the past life I was seeing right now was probably after he grew stronger.

Booooooooooooom!!!

Craaaaaaaaaack! Crack!

The two didn't talk in their past lives or in their current lives.

They could've provoked and swayed their target's mind through words, but they were just swinging their swords at each other. If I were them, I would've talked a lot. I wasn't sure if they were going for the idea of highly skilled swordsmen being able to understand each other just by clashing with each other's swords, but the two continued the long fight.

Incredibly, Thronus was pushing Kim Hyun-Sung back.

'Is Hyun-Sung losing?'

I could see the grim expression of the past Kim Hyun-Sung after seeing Thronus'

sword skill. Obviously, I didn't know what that bastard was up to, what he was doing, and what sword skill he had just executed, but it wasn't that difficult to deduce the latter. Basically, he drew an image. I couldn't really figure it out, but it felt like the stars were falling.

Obviously, Kim Hyun-Sung was busy blocking his attacks. In the end, he took a step back to collect his breath, but there was no way the alcoholic pigeon would let him.

Their battlefield had gotten quite expansive and empty as well.

The two swinging their swords was enough to change the terrain, and if I were to show someone the before and after picture of the scene in front of them, they would be in disbelief. One swing of their sword was capable of obliterating an entire forest.

Whenever Kim Hyun-Sung was blasted away, he would shatter a few buildings before finally coming to a halt.

Boooooooooooom!!

Thronus got punched in the face, and he flew into the ruined city.

Their stage changed, and they were now fighting near a forest.

"*Ahhhhhhhhhhh!!*"

It was becoming a bloodbath, and it seemed there was blood flowing through the angel's veins because his face was covered in blood. Kim Hyun-Sung looked as if his left hand was feeling uncomfortable. He was in a mess, but they both looked horrible.

Basically, they were desperate.

The strange part was that Thronus' body looked kind of broken. I wasn't sure if that was the right description, but his body looked as if it was buffering. His movement was changing little by little, so it didn't seem strange, but his movement was changing in a bad way. I didn't know how to explain it, but it looked as if he was overdoing it. He definitely had the advantage, but he continued unleashing unreasonable attacks.

'What's going on?'

That was when Kim Hyun-Sung's sword pierced Thronus's heart…

The end of the grand fight came without warning, and he fell to the ground.

Our lovely regressor, Kim Hyun-Sung, was the victor.

However, Kim Hyun-Sung was at his limits, and there was no sense of accomplishment in his eyes as he was collecting his breath. He was exhausted, and he seemed relieved that the extremely difficult and long fight had finally come to an end.

"*Haa… haa… haa…*"

Kim Hyun-Sung also fell to the side.

He got up again and walked, but he fell after taking a few steps. The masked man appeared not too long after, and he stood in front of Thronus, who was dying with a sword sticking out of his heart. I couldn't read his gaze as he stood next to the dying Thronus, who was staring at the sky.

"…"

"Is this… how I'm going to die?" Thronus asked.

"Thronus," the masked man said.

"This is my last moment," said Thronus.

"Thronus…" he repeated.

"This… was my last. I didn't think that I'd meet my end…" he mumbled.

"…"

"I never thought much about death because I never gave much meaning to the birth and disappearance of someone. We were born to not think about that, but it's unfortunate." Thronus continued.

"…"

“It’s unfortunate. It’s unfortunate that I won’t be able to see the world that you—no, that we have imagined. I’m sad that I can’t keep my promise. I’m disappointed, and I'm afraid of disappearing just like this,” he confessed.

“…”

“It’s not your fault that I lost; it's not your fault that I'm dying. Your orders were always right. I lost because I couldn't carry out the mission you gave me. I thought it was possible, but… I couldn’t meet your expectations…” Thronus trailed off.

“*P-Pft*.”

“I couldn’t…” he repeated.

“*Hahahahaha*,” the masked man laughed.

“…”

“*Hahahahahahaha!*” the masked man continued laughing.

“What's wrong?” Thronus questioned.

“Idiot. *Hahaha!* Stupid bastard,” the masked man cursed.

“You…”

“You still don’t know? You stupid pigeon. You’re so slow-witted. That’s why the other pigeons are calling you stupid,” the masked man said.

“You…”

“You really haven’t figured out what’s going on? You stupid pigeon. You don’t need to feel bad or apologize because this is what I wanted. I’m actually thankful, Thronus. You carried out your mission perfectly, and you got yourselves a pretty good ending for your decent role,” he explained.

“What are you… talking about right now…” Thronus asked.

“I’m your killer, you stupid pigeon. I killed you, not Kim Hyun-Sung,” he revealed.

"…"

"I never wanted you to win in the first place because you needed to die here, Thronus. You have been waiting for my order to die from beginning to end. Do you understand? I told you to jump toward Kim Hyun-Sung because I wanted you to die by getting stabbed by his sword. *Hahaha!*" the masked man laughed.

"What… are you saying… *Cough, cough*," Thronus questioned.

"You must be really stupid if you can't understand what I'm saying despite explaining everything to you, Thronus. There's no way I'd choose you, you idiot. Did you really think I would leave it up to a smelly pigeon like you? *Ptooey*," the man spat.

"You… you…" he muttered.

"The person I chose is this man right here. The exhausted, fallen hero who had completed his task brilliantly, and the one who couldn't overcome… the one carrying burdens on his back. Kim Hyun-Sung, the failed hero.

"Wow… it has a nice ring to it. Don't you agree? Kim Hyun-Sung, the failed hero! Kim Hyun-Sung—the hero carrying all the burdens in the world. He's the one who changed the world, not a bunch of pigeons. This man here will save this world instead of you guys," he continued.

"What…"

"What? You thought I would come to you crying and film some kind of drama or something? You stupid bastard. You idiot. *Hahaha.* Brainless fool. *Ah!* I should at least tell you this. Thanks, Thronus. Thanks for dying to Kim Hyun-Sung. You've gained a lot of experience. You've given me confidence and the courage that I can do it. Today's memory will be a lot of help for our Hyun-Sung," he added.

"Who is it…" Thronus asked.

'What? *Hahaha*," the masked man laughed.

"Who made you… like that?" he asked.

"What kind of bullshit are you talking about, you crazy bastard?" the masked man mumbled.

“W-Who… is the one… who made you so corrupted…” he questioned.

“Wow, you’re something else. I knew you were stupid, but… More importantly, isn’t it time for you to die? Pigeons are really tenacious. *Ptoeeey*,” the masked man complained.

“I asked… who’s responsible for making you like this… *Haa… haa…* Wait. If you… wait a little…” Thronus stuttered. “I can save you. I can… save you… It’s… my… fault… I should’ve… taken better care… of… you…”

“I didn’t expect this kind of situation,” the masked man remarked.

“I didn’t think… it would… turn out this way… *Haa… haa…”* Thronus sighed.

“You’re a dumber pigeon than I thought,” the masked man said.

“I can save…” Thronus repeated.

“So you guys are capable of crying. I thought you guys weren’t even human…” the masked man said.

“Give me… a little… more time…” Thronus muttered.

“Just shut up already, Thronus. There’s a problem with the script because of you. Shit. *Ah*, damn it, damn it… All because of a stupid bastard… From beginning until the end… *Ah*…” the masked man complained.

“Please…”

“I told you to shut up,” the masked man repeated.

“…”

“*Ah*, let’s do this. I think you’re right, Thronus,” the masked man said.

“…”

“Who do you think caused me to become corrupt? I honestly wasn’t planning on doing this, but I became corrupt without realizing it. I was hoping someone would save me, but no one helped me in the end. Everyone ignored me. Everyone I

considered precious died, and I became like this after losing my mind. I'm sorry, Thronus. I couldn't get rid of the pitch-black energy of the darkness. In the end… In the end, I was consumed by it," the masked man explained.

"*Haa… haa…*"

"There's no way I would actually betray you, Thronus. We're friends and we understand each other. I still remember the night sky we saw together.

"It was nice. There was a cool breeze and there were shooting stars. I had fun talking to you… Yeah, it was fun. Honestly, it was kind of boring… Actually, I had fun as well, Thronus," the masked man added.

"…"

"We're like soulmates. While we're on the subject… I really hope you save me if we ever meet again. I really hope you save me," the masked man requested.

"…"

"*Ah*, I should tell you something important," the masked man said.

"*Haa… haa… haa…*"

"My name…" the masked man paused.

"*Haa…*"

"My name is Lee Ki-Young. Remember it. My name is Lee Ki-Young," the masked man said.

"*Haa… haa…*"

"Lee. Ki. Young," the masked man emphasized.

"…"

"It must be your time. Goodbye, then, Thronus," the masked man said.

"…"

“…”

The sight was so disgusting that I felt nauseous just looking at it.

Of course, I felt nauseous at the sight rather than who was there.

CHAPTER 709
SOULMATE (8)

'There are so many things to consider.'

The first problem was I had no idea why I suddenly saw our past lives. All this time, I thought the Lee Ki-Young with complete memories was just bluffing.

Fortunately, I didn't have to know the entire truth.

‘Kim Hyun-Sung stabbing Lee Ki-Young.’

I had already reached a conclusion, and it was the key to victory. I had made a bet with Lucifer, and the winning condition was our victory. I thought things were going swimmingly, but it seemed that I had overlooked something.

Well, I didn't have to dismiss all of the conclusions I had reached because of this new discovery, but I still had to dig deeper into it. I was worried that the masked scum's soul had invaded Lee Ki-Young's soul of pure light.

I pondered over it, and…

‘It doesn’t seem that far-fetched… ’

With that in mind, I didn’t feel the need to stop the situation. Of course, it wasn’t like I could do anything to stop it in the first place. It was also kind of helpful to me.

First of all, I needed to organize the things I had seen. An assumption popped into my head that completely trashed my previous assumptions, so I had to change my thoughts.

‘Was Kim Hyun-Sung not the enemy?’

The most shocking part was that the masked scum wasn't being hostile toward Kim Hyun-Sung. It was the fact that gave me the most excitement.

I thought Kim Hyun-Sung and the masked scum of his past life were enemies, and their confrontation was the key point in the history of their past lives.

At some point, they hated each other to the point that they waged war on each other several times. The conflict deepened, and as a result, the situation became so bad that it resulted in the destruction of the continent.

Kim Hyun-Sung was a warrior who needed to save the world, and the masked scum was his opponent. It was a pretty typical story.

They were like the warrior and the demon king. They were so hostile towards each other that the word *rival* wasn't even the right word to describe them.

At first, I really thought masked scum Jin Cheong was a hopeless psychopath, but…

'Was I mistaken? Was he not completely hopeless?'

What was it, then?

"The person I chose is this man right here. The exhausted, fallen hero who had completed his task brilliantly, and the one who couldn't overcome… the one carrying burdens on his back. Kim Hyun-Sung, the failed hero.

"Wow… it has a nice ring to it. Don't you agree? Kim Hyun-Sung, the failed hero! Kim Hyun-Sung—the hero carrying all the burdens in the world. He's the one who changed the world, not a bunch of pigeons. This man here will save this world instead of you guys."

What the hell? He spoke as if he raised Kim Hyun-Sung with care. It was no different from him acknowledging that his hostility toward Kim Hyun-Sung had all been a lie. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that his line just now had destroyed all of my assumptions.

Of course, there was no guarantee that what he said was the truth because no one could really understand the masked scum's thoughts.

It could simply be a line to deceive the alcoholic pigeon, or it could just be nonsense. I couldn't trust any of his words, but I was certain of one thing—the masked scum…

"The masked scum has never harmed Kim Hyun-Sung," I said.

He had never laid a hand on Kim Hyun-Sung. There were situations where he could have killed Kim Hyun-Sung, but he didn't do anything against the latter.

In addition, the fact that Kim Hyun-Sung survived even the destruction of the world meant that this certain assumption of mine might be true.

I thought it was because he had received Altanus' protection, but at this point, there were other possibilities.

The masked scum had decided to let Kim Hyun-Sung live.

"Shit, he must be crazy."

Many thoughts popped into my head. What if the masked scum didn't resent Kim Hyun-Sung in the first place? Of course, if one were to think about the things that had happened so far, it was highly likely that he'd resent Kim Hyun-Sung, but it was possible that he came to understand him at some point. His goal could've changed from revenge to something else, or he could have had a change of mind.

As for why he remained hostile to Kim Hyun-Sung on the outside, it had to be because…

'He wanted Kim Hyun-Sung to become even stronger?'

I shook my head at the thought and looked at Kim Hyun-Sung using the Telescope. He was still fighting the alcoholic pigeon. The fight that was even more violent than the fight in their past life continued, and my jaw dropped at the sight.

- Kim Hyun-Sung.

-…

Boom!

The allied and enemy forces had created a distance between them and Kim Hyun-Sung, which meant that Kim Hyun-Sung and the alcoholic pigeon were fighting in an isolated battlefield.

I saw a large dome around them, and it was the least we could do to prevent the allied troops from getting caught in the shockwaves of their battle. Of course, I

wasn't sure if casting such a large defensive shield was even worth it.

As expected, it wasn't worth it, as it was as fragile as a sheet of paper in front of Kim Hyun-Sung and the alcoholic pigeon. To make matters worse, they were fighting near a castle wall, and that wall was starting to crumble.

'Ah, shit. We can't let that get destroyed.'

I had yet to make a move when Kim Hyun-Sung swung his sword. The dark mana coursing through his sword created a sword wave that created a massive hole in the wall. However, it looked like Kim Hyun-Sung hadn't done it on purpose.

He looked like he was controlling his strength, and I thought it was because he knew that this fight was markedly different compared to the fight in his past life, where he didn't have to consider so many variables and could fight with no holds barred.

The skies changed colors, and the ground rumbled as sparks flew everywhere across the isolated battlefield. Anyone could tell that the two were enraged, and they were fighting each other like crazed beasts.

The alcoholic pigeon had reason to be furious, unlike Kim Hyun-Sung, but…

'It's going to be strange if he's not angry.'

There was a high chance that Kim Hyun-Sung was just intoxicated in the atmosphere or he was intoxicated by his power. He was different from the past Kim Hyun-Sung, who could barely keep up with the alcoholic pigeon. The present Kim Hyun-Sung was domineering; he had made up for his lack of mana, and he even had wings.

He had grown dramatically stronger compared to his past life.

I cheered him on as his eyes got redder and redder, but honestly, the alcoholic pigeon was a tough opponent. It actually looked like the alcoholic pigeon was fighting Kim Hyun-Sung with the same desperation the past life Kim Hyun-Sung had while fighting the former.

He somehow managed to keep up with Kim Hyun-Sung by using his power judiciously. Kim Hyun-Sung had the upper hand in this fight, but for some reason, it didn't feel like he was winning.

After fighting for a while, they lowered their swords and stared at each other.

-…

- You've gotten weaker.

- No, I've gotten stronger, Thronus.

- You've gotten weaker.

- Let's see if you can still talk that way once I've chopped your head off.

'When did you learn to say such harsh words, Hyun-Sung?'

- Have you gone mad by wielding that power? That power will consume you eventually, Kim Hyun-Sung.

- I've always been rational, and I simply made a reasonable decision. I've always been aware of what I'm doing and what I need to do.

- What a disgrace. Can you not see what you look like right now?

- I know that I look like a disgrace.

'No, you're not a disgrace, Hyun-Sung. You're not! You look amazing. Who would look at your black wings and say that you're a disgrace?'

- I know I look hideous…

- Those are the words of someone who had sold their soul to demons, Kim Hyun-Sung. Look at yourself. You don't look any different than them. There was a time when I thought you were a shining star, but now… you're not shining at all. I can't even call you a star. Actually, it almost feels ridiculous having this kind of conversation with you. I had high expectations of you, but I don't think I have to ask you more questions other than what I said earlier. Your role is to answer—tell me where he is.

-…

- I don't need your orders, Seraphim. This one cannot defeat me. I'll find him myself.

- I don’t know what you’ve been saying, but… I hope you’re aware that your actions and words aren’t convincing at all.

- You’ve even become an idiot. You're drunk with that power of yours.

-…

Kim Hyun-Sung bit his lips. He didn’t want to acknowledge it, but he had to do so. The fight soon resumed. Kim Hyun-Sung looked as if he wasn’t going to lose, and Thronus wielded his sword once again.

And that was when the tables started to turn.

‘That drug addict pigeon.’

“Why is he so strong? What the hell did he do?” I questioned.

I thought Thronus was weaker than Cherubim and Dominions, but he was overwhelmingly stronger than them. Otherwise, there would be no explanation for what I was looking at right now.

Kim Hyun-Sung started to look anxious in the middle of the fight. He didn’t fall for Thronus’ mind games, but Thronus was trampling on Kim Hyun-Sung as if he was showing the latter that fights weren't all about stats.

I felt like I was watching Kim Hyun-Sung's battle against Donovan, except Kim Hyun-Sung was in the shoes of that musclehead.

- Shit.

- Idiot.

- Shit…!

‘I’m sure he had the advantage… ’

It seemed like Kim Hyun-Sung was being cornered mentally.

‘He hasn’t matured yet.’

I realized once again that Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't the perfect hero.

"He actually looks unstable," I said.

Despite experiencing his past life and other things, he remained immature and unstable.

'Was it because of that?'

"It was because of that…"

I felt like I reached an epiphany and now I understood everything that happened.

"That's why."

The scattered puzzle pieces were coming together.

I decided to come up with a ridiculous assumption. What if the masked scum really wanted to save the world? If I were to assume that he already knew of the fact that he wouldn't be able to overcome the adversity of his past life, what if everything so far was a part of his preparation to finally overcome what he couldn't overcome?

It sounded really ridiculous, but based on what I had seen so far, it didn't seem all that absurd. There were actually so many parts that made sense, and I was really surprised to realize that.

I finally understood everything. Everything was coming together.

The masked scum didn't want to destroy the continent. He probably wanted to protect it.

"That's right."

What if he had chosen Kim Hyun-Sung because he thought he needed someone to go up against the Outer God? It would explain why the masked scum didn't kill Kim Hyun-Sung despite having so many opportunities to do so.

It would also explain the strange scene I had seen just now.

"Why was it Kim Hyun-Sung?" I asked.

He wasn’t the perfect hero, but he was mankind’s last hope. I got goosebumps just thinking about it. It was hard to remain calm after finding out that the masked scum wasn’t the villain in the first place. If my assumption was correct…

He had to have been having a hard time.

He had to have been suffering by himself. He knew that everyone would resent him, but he still took that step forward onto the path that no one could and would take. His courage was extraordinary, and I couldn't call him a scum anymore. He was no longer a masked scum. He was the hero who had sacrificed himself for the continent.

I recalled the scenes of the past that I had seen from out of the blue.

"Thanks, Altanus."

The one carrying the suffering of the world on his back…

"We can start again, noona."

The one who became the villain to save the continent.

"This man here will save this world instead of you guys."

The one wearing a mask for the greater good—the masked hero.

“It was me…” I muttered, dumbstruck.

It wasn’t Jin Cheong. He couldn't be a hero. There was no way a scum like Jin Cheong could become that kind of hero.

“It was me…” I repeated.

I was the masked hero of the previous timeline.

“Shit, I-I was the masked hero…”

I couldn’t believe it. The massive twist made my jaw drop to the floor.

“Lee Ki-Young is… the masked hero?”

The mask wasn't to hide my face but to hide my tears of sadness.

CHAPTER 710
SCENARIO (1)

I felt kind of embarrassed, but it didn’t take long for that feeling to disappear.

It was both a burdensome truth and a sad story. I thought perhaps my change in attitude was a bit too sudden, but who would dare to throw stones at me? My heart was inundated with sadness when I thought about how the masked hero and savior had to have felt as he spent his days with no one else to accompany him.

‘So that’s what happened.’

I thought it was good enough to answer my question—*Is it really necessary to destroy the continent to this extent?*

I was sure he was suffering, but he probably had no other chance if he wanted to start his second life. The gods above wouldn't feel bad about the death of a few humans, and I was sure they thought that the continent was beyond salvation.

Humans weren't the only ones eager to profit and seek benefits for themselves. The gods up above had to have looked for the most reasonable way to resolve the issue.

I was sure they discussed it and had to get confirmation if their method was truly reasonable. It would inflict irreparable damage and wounds that couldn't be healed by ordinary means.

My past self might have thought that it was the condition in exchange for becoming a regressor. The masked savior had fulfilled his mission brilliantly. He had inflicted irreparable damage to the continent, and he suffered a big wound in his heart that couldn't be healed by ordinary means.

‘I thought it was strange.’

To my knowledge, psychopaths of that level were non-existent. The evil deeds he had committed were so wicked that I questioned if he really did all that. Right now, I felt like that question was finally answered.

‘Causing an epidemic… and… using humans as plague bombs? Wow… Where in the world would there be a person crazy enough to do something like that?’

He didn’t do it because he wanted to do so. Lee Ki-Young, the masked hero of our past lives, had done it because it was part of his plan, and he had no choice but to do so.

Of course, I was sure he couldn't accurately predict future events, but I believed I had helped him draw the bigger picture. Like…

“Kim Hyun-Sung’s bag,” I said.

Ramus Tucker's Introduction to Alchemy. The Epic-rank item that Kim Hyun-Sung had found in the tutorial dungeon.

‘This is strange as well.’

It was possible that he really did find it there, or he might have brought it with him before he became a regressor, but there wasn’t a reason for him to bring that single book out of all the items he could have brought with him.

Seeing that Kim Hyun-Sung and I were the last remaining survivors of the ruined continent, he probably included that book in his plan so that Kim Hyun-Sung would take his bag with him to his next life.

I had no idea how he managed to do that, but it was a pretty convincing assumption.

The system had been destroyed. There were neither creatures nor items. If Kim Hyun-Sung had a Mythic-ran item, he would have chosen to take that with him before he regressed.

In other words, Kim Hyun-Sung had taken that bag with him because…

‘It was the only item he could take with him to this life.’

Why?

The masked hero, Lee Ki-Young, had to have done it on purpose because he didn't want me to become a black mage. After all, the black mage job involved committing sins he didn't want me to commit for the sake of advancement.

Thus, it made sense that he didn't want me to become a black mage.

Since I had Mind's Eye, he probably deduced that I would follow Kim Hyun-Sung at all costs, and he was right. As a result of his scheme, Lee Ki-Young of this life chose to become an alchemist.

I felt a shiver down my spine when I realized that the coincidences I had encountered so far were most likely part of the bigger picture he had drawn. It felt like the masked hero was still cheering me on and guiding me onto the right path, even though his ego was no more.

The memories of my past life that I kept seeing were proof of it, and he believed that the Lee Ki-Young in the past life and the Lee Ki-Young in this life were the same person.

I was sure there were many variables he had failed to consider, but I was sure of one thing—he wanted to hand me the baton.

He believed that I would take care of the rest, but it was a difficult decision to make, considering our personalities. Even if we were the same person, I was the type of person who would find it difficult to trust even myself.

I wasn’t sure why he wanted me to take care of the rest, but…

“I've received your dying wish,” I mumbled.

I had to accept it because I couldn’t ignore his genuine desire to save the continent. I knew what I had to do, and I could figure out what kind of script I needed to write.

My goal in my past life and in this life was the same.

‘The growth of our Hyun-Sung.’

It was the crux of the matter.

It might also be related to the story where Kim Hyun-Sung would end up stabbing Lee Ki-Young.

It wouldn't be a comic-story-like awakening where he would gain a new power once he killed his most precious friend, but he would definitely undergo a huge inner

change.

After all, it was common sense for a hero to grow by leaps and bounds after experiencing an inner change.

Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't strong enough to drive away the Outer God, and it was evidenced by the fact that he was struggling against Thronus.

Kim Hyun-Sung needed a new kind of power.

'He's not there yet. He needs to grow stronger. He must.'

How? I knew a script had already been written in our past lives, and I knew who I could use.

"The alcoholic pigeon," I said.

The past Lee Ki-Young was telling me to use him, and it was one of the tasks he gave me.

'That pigeon can't kill me.'

He had to have told Thronus my name because he wanted me to use him.

Basically, I had a free chess piece.

It was no different from someone giving me the queen to use while playing chess.

Seeing that Lee Ki-Young had notified me through his past life just in case I failed to catch on, Thronus had to be necessary for Kim Hyun-Sung's awakening into a five-star hero from his four-star hero status.

I was unaware of what the script was like before it was changed, but I had to use it.

My heart broke seeing Kim Hyun-Sung getting a beatdown.

'Shit, stop beating up our Hyun-Sung, you demon! How dare you injure the precious body of the continent's hero!'

Booooooooooooom!

- Shit…

- I told you. You've gotten weaker.

- There’s no way.

-…

- That can’t be true! There’s no way I've gotten weaker… I've become… even stronger.

-…

- I’ve become stronger! To protect the things I need to protect. I chose to become stronger, and that’s how I obtained this power. I must become stronger. I must become even stronger. That way, I can protect those who are precious to me.

- Protect what?

- That’s none of your business, Thronus. The important thing is that I need to stop showing this side of myself. I have to keep on standing. I need to be someone who can support others. I-I no longer want to be a burden. I can do it. I’m sure I can. I can do it.

‘Our Hyun-Sung is losing it.’

At this point, I could already see the outcome of the battle. The person who had to be rational at all costs was losing his mind. He was under a lot of pressure, and he was starting to get obsessed with power.

‘Should I go out there?’

Did he need more stimulation? Would he awaken his new powers if he was cornered even further? I thought perhaps this was the time when Kim Hyun-Sung would stab me to death, but it wasn’t the case at all. I couldn't see the scenery I had seen.

In that case, Kim Hyun-Sung had to withstand more pressure.

‘I think Ji-Hye noona has some free time.’

It felt like the battlefield was gradually stabilizing. I felt kind of nervous about

leaving the situation room, but I didn't have a reason to be here when I couldn't order people through quests while watching the battlefield with the Telescope. Some warriors would become a bit confused, but Kim Hyun-Sung was more important than them.

'I need to go.'

Kim Hyun-Sung had to go stronger.

Fortunately, he wasn't that far away, and I could reach him with just a few flaps of my wings. I ran out of the situation room, and I started hearing loud explosions.

"Father Lee Ki-Young, it's dangerous here. Please return to the situation room…"

"Where's the defense line?" I asked.

"The demons wearing angel masks keep on coming. We have no problem with holding out, but…"

'It'll become dangerous if it takes too long, right? I know.'

"I have to make a quick trip. Maintain the status quo for as long as possible," I ordered.

"…"

I didn't hear an answer because the field commander stared at me dumbfoundedly as I spread my large wings.

I looked through the Telescope, and I saw Kim Hyun-Sung desperately swinging his sword.

It seemed like he was no longer a threat to Thronus.

'Will I make it in time?'

I flapped my wings of light as anxiety started to grip my heart.

- Shit… shit…!

- What a disgrace.

- Shit!

-…

- Die! Die! Die!

-…

- I can’t lose no matter what. I can’t…

My heart broke seeing Kim Hyun-Sung so helpless in a fight.

'How come he's struggling so much? Does this even make sense?'

I figured he would have been a better fighter if he had chosen not to accept Lucifer's power. I felt like I could finally understand what Thronus was talking about earlier.

‘He’s relying on that power.’

Kim Hyun-Sung was relying on Lucifer’s power more than his own, and I had no idea why. He seemed to lack so much confidence that I thought perhaps I should have taken care of his mental health before anything else.

He was trying to hypnotize himself to victory.

‘If Hyun-Sung were even half as confident as Hee-Ra noona… ’

I couldn’t criticize him because I was at fault as well. I thought the only thing that mattered was him becoming even stronger, so I figured that it wasn't strange for him to become like this.

Indeed, it wasn't strange that he had such low confidence in himself, and it was all because of everything he had gone through. He had always been unwilling to carry the heavy burden of protecting the continent, and at some point, he had lost sight of what he was supposed to be fighting for.

We had come to an agreement while watching the sunset, but it clearly wasn't a good enough reason for him to fight. A part of Kim Hyun-Sung definitely wanted to stay on

the sidelines rather than watch the sunset together with me.

The hero looked more pitiful than I thought after he had stopped believing in himself because of his continuous failures. Right now, Kim Hyun-Sung looked like Jung Ha-Yan whenever things didn't go her way. He was unleashing his black magic haphazardly while crying, so of course, he couldn't possibly be a threat to Thronus.

- With this… With this power…

He assumed a certain stance, and I instantly realized that he was trying to use his Sunset Sword. The sword in his hand gradually turned red as the seconds went on, but… the Sunset Sword refused to answer his call.

- Why…

Thronus swung his sword. His sword was surrounded by what looked like a bunch of stars falling down the night sky. A flower of blood blossomed on Kim Hyun-Sung's chest, and he collapsed to the ground.

-…

Thronus raised his sword. He was going to swing it, but he stopped upon hearing me.

“Please spare him.”

I reached them just in time. I spread my arms and wings wide while standing between Kim Hyun-Sung and Thronus. Perhaps it was because of my wings that were made of light, but I felt like my entire body was shining in a radiant light.

“…”

“…”

“Kill me and spare him,” I said. I believed the alcoholic pigeon couldn't possibly kill me, so I said it for the sake of the scenario.

CHAPTER 711
SCENARIO (2)

‘Wait, that guy doesn't know what I look like, though.’

My appearance was fancy, and the scene wasn’t bad either.

‘Should I have made a name tag or something?’

The way I slowly stood between the two as feathers of light fell around me made me look holy.

I couldn’t see myself, but I was sure I was overflowing with holy energy.

I was so fragile that I looked like I could collapse at any moment, but I stood firm between the two of them while enveloped in light. There was no way Thronus could harm me, knowing how fragile I was. I tried to look like a victim as much as possible because looking pitiful was the best thing to do right now.

Actually, I couldn't look too weak. I had to show him my determined gaze as if telling him that I had no regrets about sacrificing myself for the hero of the continent. I looked like a typical victim, but the issue was that Thronus wasn't familiar with my face.

If possible, I wanted Kim Hyun-Sung to call out my name.

‘Mr. Ki-Young!’

Hearing him say that would put me at ease.

‘Should I at least introduce myself despite the awkward timing?’

Kim Hyun-Sung had no idea what was going on, and he definitely didn't expect to see me here. Not only was he at a loss for words, but he also seemed ashamed of the fact that he had been defeated.

He stared at me in stupefaction, and it'd probably take some time before he came back to his senses.

'Shit. You won't kill me right away, right? You're not going to stab me, right? We obviously look like we're from the same race. Don't you agree? You're not going to kill me, right?'

I'd introduce myself once he was about to swing his sword.

I stared intently at Thronus, and it felt like time itself had stopped.

I heard a voice, but it wasn't from Kim Hyun-Sung.

It was from Thronus.

"…"

"…"

"Lee… Ki-Young?" Thronus said.

'How did this bastard know?'

"L-Lee… Ki-Young?" he repeated.

'Unbelievable.'

"You're…" he paused.

"…"

"You're Lee Ki-Young. Y-You were Lee Ki-Young," he stuttered.

I couldn't read his expression. I wasn't saying that I was the alcohol, but he looked like an alcoholic who was seeing alcohol for the first time in a long time. He was crying, and his voice was trembling.

"You don't look hideous," he said.

He was shaking as if he was experiencing withdrawal symptoms. I had no idea what

he was thinking, but I at least knew that I didn't have to die to resolve this issue.

"You actually look valiant. You're exactly like what I imagined you to be," he continued.

I did look pretty good in good lighting, so I was happy he thought that way.

"You didn't lose your light despite being amongst the fallen. Y-Your nature truly cannot be changed," he added.

He looked kind of happy.

"Seraphim, are you watching? It's him. I was right. Look at this human. He hasn't lost his light and has been nurturing the small and weak light living inside of him. *Hahaha*… I'm so happy. How did he manage to find his light and grow it?" he muttered.

My power was bestowed upon me by Benigoa, but it seemed that it was decent enough to earn his favor, and it had to be because of the wings of light.

I could definitely use this to my advantage.

"So we meet again. Finally. I kept chanting what you told me so that I wouldn't forget it. I knew we'd meet again someday, but… I never imagined we'd meet this quickly. I've been thinking about many things, and I don't really know where to start now that we've seen each other again.

"My friend… the one who truly understands me. I've come here to save you. Here, take my hand, human, I mean, Lee Ki-Young. The demon behind you is your enemy. He's not worthy of your sacrifice. I'll kill him and free you," he explained.

'No, shit. Didn't you hear me? I told you not to kill Hyun-Sung.'

I shook my head with determination, and I had to prepare myself in case he moved behind me to stab Kim Hyun-Sung.

After taking a step back, I started getting closer to Kim Hyun-Sung. Now, there was no way he could stab Kim Hyun-Sung without stabbing me as well. I needed to let him know that my belief would never waver and that the light in me wouldn't burn out.

‘Shit, that was cool. I might actually fall for myself.’

“Looks like you don’t remember me,” Thronus said.

“…”

“Don’t worry too much. It's going to be difficult, but I might be able to find a way. It doesn’t matter, even if you don’t remember me anymore. We can take our time. Seraphim, Cherubim, and Dominions are waiting for you, and they'll definitely welcome you,” he continued.

‘This bastard is acting as if we’re best friends… You’re not listening to all of this, are you, Hyun-Sung?’

I couldn’t say he seemed calm because he still looked out of it. He probably couldn’t understand what was happening right now. He grabbed onto my sleeve tightly while breathing heavily, but he was probably doing this unconsciously.

Actually, that wasn’t it, either. His lips fluttered close and open; he seemed aware that I was here. I didn’t understand what he was saying, but if I were to interpret, he was probably repeating the word *run.*

‘I’m not going to run, Hyun-Sung.’

There was no way I’d abandon the precious hero of the continent and run away like a coward.

“Look down at the man you’re trying to protect again—”

“I’m already looking at him,” I interrupted.

“He had sold his soul to the demon. He’s a deceiver. Staying with him is dangerous,” he warned.

“He’s not dangerous,” I said.

“That dirty…”

“He’s not dirty. He’s not dirty at all,” I argued.

'Hyun-Sung. Shit, you're listening, right? You can hear my voice, right?'

"He's not dirty," I repeated.

I said it three times, and I even made sure that he could read my lips.

"I'm not sure why you're saying that you know me, but… you're just judging him by his appearance," I told him.

'What are you looking at? Who would call Kim Hyun-Sung a disgrace?'

He had experienced so much pain and hardships and had lost a lot of people close to him. He became a regressor even though he didn't want to become one, and he had to endure the pain all by himself until recently.

I couldn't imagine how painful it had to have been for him to lose many of his beloved people. I was sure Kim Hyun-Sung was in pain just as much as the masked savior.

Doom Hyun-Sung was created because of all sorts of negative emotions, including the pressure of carrying so much burden, the pressure of not being able to go against fate, and the fear of losing those close to him again.

Doom Hyun-Sung was the amalgamation of those emotions.

His appearance was far from light, but he was still a hero.

"You guys are the ones wearing the mask of demons. I know what this man is truly like," I said.

'Hyun-Sung, you heard what I said, right? Make sure you don't stab me painfully later. Be easy on me.'

The comment wasn't anything special, but it was definitely touching. I couldn't imagine how sweet those words sounded to him. His self-esteem had hit rock bottom, and he was feeling ashamed of himself for being so weak-minded, but his brother suddenly appeared and told him that everything was going to be okay.

There was nothing more comforting than that.

People would even feel touched if a complete stranger were to comfort them, not to mention if one of their beloved friends comforted them.

If Kim Hyun-Sung heard me, I was sure he would feel something.

No, he definitely felt something, and I could tell it from his face.

'Hey… why are you crying, damn it?'

He reacted better than I thought.

'Why are you crying?'

Were my words *that* touching? He couldn't stop crying. He couldn't even move to wipe his tears away, which meant that his wounds were more severe than I thought. I wanted to check his condition, but I wasn't dumb enough to do that right now.

Thronus standing before me looked like he was having mixed emotions.

"I-I'm sure you're misunderstanding something. If you talk to us for a bit, I'm sure you'll immediately agree with me," Thronus said.

"…"

"You're being deceived by that deceiver right now. He's a villain who deceives everyone. Like you said, even if that's not who he truly is, he had already turned his back on the light. He's not someone you can trust. Hurry up… move…"

'No, damn it. I'm not moving. Kill me instead. Kill me if you can, damn it. Actually, Hyun-Sung will get up before that happens.'

I felt Kim Hyun-Sung pulling my sleeve harder. It seemed like Thronus hadn't noticed, but Kim Hyun-Sung was moving little by little.

'He's trying to get up.'

He might be trying to escape Lucifer's influence and retrieve his own powers.

I was starting to become certain that the four-star Kim Hyun-Sung was advancing to five-star Kim Hyun-Sung. Since he had already talked to himself, wasn't it time for

him to get up? Had he returned to the beginning and found his true self?

'You can become stronger, right? Shit, Hyun-Sung. Hurry up and get up. My legs are hurting.'

His wings were wriggling, and I naturally looked forward to seeing the hero standing up while enduring the intense pain. I wanted to tell him to get up a little faster, but the best option here was to remain standing.

Of course, I should give him some courage as well.

"I'm sure you can do it."

'Hyun-Sung.'

"I believe you'll overcome this, just like you've always done," I continued.

'I'm ready to cry as well.'

"I'm sorry I can't stay by your side," I said.

'I'm ready to die. You can see it, right?'

"I'm sorry for not keeping my promise," I added.

'Get up before I really die. Get up and awaken.'

"I'm sure you'll do well, Mr. Hyun-Sung. I leave the rest up to you," I told him.

Thronus looked like he had no intention of killing me, but I just had to pretend that he was about to kill me. The pigeon looked like he wouldn't kill me, and he even told me that. Of course, I didn't pay attention to his words. My focus was entirely on our hero.

Thronus bit his lips and walked slowly to us. He noticed Kim Hyun-Sung trying to get up.

"Forgive me," Thronus said.

He sounded like he was apologizing for offending me. I thought I would be able to

buy some time, but he grabbed my hand and lifted me up so easily. He moved so gently that I didn't feel any pain, but I screamed as if I were in pain.

"*Aaaaaaaaaaaah!*"

'Now, Hyun-Sung. I'm dying. You're watching, right? This bastard is trying to kill me. Hurry up and get up.'

"*Heuuk*…"

'This pigeon is trying to kill me. This is the end. I think he's really going to kill me. My arm almost broke just now. Why aren't you getting up?'

"*Aaaaaaaaaack!*"

When I looked at Kim Hyun-Sung while screaming even louder, I noticed his bloodshot eyes and him biting his lips. His bloodshot eyes became even more bloodshot.

'He's getting up.'

"*Heuuk*… Please…" I begged.

'Get up, man. Awaken already.'

"…go."

'Awaken! Awaken again and again!'

"L-Let go of his hand!!" Kim Hyun-Sung screamed.

Our lovely regressor got up and punched Thronus' face.

His movement and the undulations of his mana had become markedly different.

'He has awakened… '

He looked like he had advanced to five-star Kim Hyun-Sung.

'He did it!'

'What the… W-w-what's up with the horns on your head? Wait, hold on. What's wrong with your skin? W-Wait, what's wrong with your arms? Your face… what… '

The problem was that Kim Hyun-Sung had awakened into something completely different than what I thought.

'Ack… '

I couldn't see Kim Hyun-Sung's old self in the current Kim Hyun-Sung.

CHAPTER 712
SCENARIO (3)

'Hey, what's wrong with you?'

I was too scared to look at Kim Hyun-Sung properly. At a glance, he looked like he completely lost his human side, and I doubted if he was still sane. I felt kind of uncomfortable, but I needed to check his current condition. I looked at him slowly from top to bottom, and I noticed that his legs had gotten stronger.

'Is that it?'

I couldn't tell because his legs were covered in boots, and the only difference I saw was his tail, which was now attached behind him. I didn't know what the beast tail was his tail, but one thing I was sure of was that he looked terrifying. I was sure he could use his tail as a weapon.

His two arms were noticeably different, and saying that they were covered in a dull-black color was the best way to describe them. His arms looked like beast arms, and I doubted if he could even wield a weapon. His black fingernails also looked sharp.

It felt like his overall frame had gotten a bit bigger. He had gotten more muscles, and he had gotten a bit taller as well. However, his horns that curved inward like a goat's horn were definitely his most eye-catching feature.

'I honestly think that'll make him look cool.'

I didn't know why they had to be goat horns, but it fit him.

His messy hair even looked cool.

I wasn't sure if this was the crazy crow's type, but his long hair came down to his waist.

At a glance, it didn't look like ordinary hair. It was as if the material of the hair had changed, and it seemed like one couldn't use an ordinary scissor to cut it.

His new appearance was fine so far, and I was willing to accept all of that, but the problem was…

'Where did your face go?'

Kim Hyun-Sung's face had completely disappeared. His face was completely covered in darkness. I saw sharp fangs and a long tongue inside his mouth. He wasn't acting hideously by sticking his tongue out and drooling, but his tongue had gotten longer than an average human being's tongue.

'Has his tongue always been that long?'

No way. Anyone would look at him and shout that he was a monster.

"…"

I couldn't read his eyes because I couldn't see his pupils. I didn't hear him growling like a beast, but I couldn't tell if he was still sane. Had he forgotten how to talk?

He looked down at me quietly, and it was scary. It didn't matter if other things about him had changed, but I needed to see his face to figure out what he was thinking.

'Shit, give his face back. Damn it, what is this? He's a monster. This isn't fair. You're still sane, right? Our Hyun-Sung hasn't become completely corrupted, right?'

I looked up nervously. I couldn't see Thronus, so Kim Hyun-Sung's punch had to have blasted him away.

Just then, Kim Hyun-Sung grabbed my arm and picked me up.

He then brought my face closer to where his face was supposed to be.

'What the… Has he completely lost it? Really? Really?'

It seemed like he was trying to see who I was. I was relieved that he didn't sniff at me like a beast, but I was scared. He might open his big mouth and bite me. I started to get worried that perhaps my acting had stimulated him a bit too much.

'Did I go overboard? Was my crying earlier the issue?'

I started regretting the way I overreacted and acted like I was going to die at any moment… My acting had to have been too realistic, and Kim Hyun-Sung got too immersed in it. He had to have thought that Thronus would stab me if he were even a beat too late.

I started regretting my frightened expression… My comment about how it was fine if he looked like a demon could have been a problem as well. He had to have thought that I was really okay with everything about him, but I wasn't okay with *this* appearance at all.

Honestly, there were too many things to consider, but the important part was that Kim Hyun-Sung had become a monster.

'His awakening failed. Damn it… '

He tightened his grip on my arm, and I frowned in pain. He trembled, seemingly surprised by my reaction. He then tilted his head. It seemed that he was still somewhat sane, and he might be relieved that he didn't inadvertently tear me to pieces.

'You didn't really change, did you? You're not going to live looking like that from now on, right?'

I was sure it was the case because this wasn't the future I had seen through Kasugano Yuno. If the future hadn't changed, then Kim Hyun-Sung would go back to his old self. It was possible that getting stabbed while he was in this form was the way for Kim Hyun-Sung to actually awaken.

It was really cliched. It was no different from the trope wherein a hero would lose his mind and realize his mistakes upon the death of a friend. He would then be reborn as a true hero. It was still too early for the cliche, but it might be the key to his awakening. Where did I put that anesthesia potion? Shit, did I even bring it with me?

If he were to stab me while he was in that form, it'd hurt a lot.

There was nothing more ridiculous than dying in vain because of a rookie mistake.

Rafael was still asleep, so this wasn't the right time. In the end, I just didn't want to feel extreme pain after getting stabbed by Gray Skull Kim Hyun-Sung.

'Where is that Thronus? He should be here by now.'

Boom!

A loud noise echoed as Kim Hyun-Sung was blasted away. I fell to the ground, and when I looked up, I saw the silver-haired Thronus in front of me.

'Shit. You're finally here.'

Right now, I couldn't tell who the hero was between the two of them.

"…"

The awakened Doom Hyun-Sung growled at Thronus and swung his sword.

Booooooooooooooom!

Crescent waves of dark sword light flew toward Thronus.

'Shit.'

I was clearly within the range of those crescent sword lights. Of course, Kim Hyun-Sung didn't aim them at me, but those sword lights would injure me if Thronus were to dodge rather than block them.

'It's over, damn it. It's over.' A sense of sadness filled me. *'Man, can you really not see me?'*

I had taken care of him, and I had helped him grow with everything I had. However, this was the display of gratitude I received. I was scared that Kim Hyun-Sung was showing hostility toward me. I couldn't even protect him because he no longer had that innocent-looking face.

It wouldn't be strange if I decided to cut ties with him, but I found it difficult to do so because we had spent so much time together.

It wasn't a proper example, but I finally understood why most married couples found it hard to sign their divorce papers.

Thronus began to look more reliable in my eyes.

“Are you okay?” Thronus asked.

“Yes…” I replied.

“I told you, didn’t I? He’s always been a monster, and he has just shown us his true form,” he said.

‘Shit, what do I do?’

“He has been completely engulfed by black magic. What you see before you is nothing more than a monster that knows how to destroy and slaughter,” he explained.

‘Bullshit. Our Hyun-Sung isn’t a monster.’

“He won’t be able to recognize anyone. He’ll destroy everything around him until he dies,” he added.

‘Stop talking like you know everything. Our Hyun-Sung is a nice and innocent boy. It’s just because he’s been hanging out with the wrong people.’

“Open your eyes and face reality. You’ll be able to see for yourself exactly what that thing is. I know that you're just pretending that you don't know. You know the truth, and you know that he can’t go back,” he said.

‘Shit. No… That can’t be true.’

Kim Hyun-Sung didn’t say anything in response, and his gaze no longer looked like he wanted to protect me. The silver-haired Thronus was right; the creature before me looked as if all he wanted to do was destroy everything.

I bit my lips and stared intently at Kim Hyun-Sung’s face.

“*Huh?*”

I noticed something new.

‘Shit… He can still come back!’

I saw a black substance on his chin covering his face, and the skin below that black

magic definitely looked normal. It was as if someone had covered his face with it. It was definitely a mask.

'Shit, we can get him back!'

Kim Hyun-Sung didn't get completely corrupted. He was just wearing a mask he couldn't take off right now, and below that mask was a face I was extremely familiar with.

'I just need to take it off.'

It was simple. I just had to remove that mask. I wasn't certain, but he might come back to his senses once that mask was removed. My heart broke when I thought about how desperate he had to have felt to the extent that he had chosen to wear that mask. He definitely thought that there was no other way. He had to wear it, or I would die.

If Kim Hyun-Sung really were a villain, then I would have died a long time ago. A light called Lee Ki-Young still remained in his subconscious. Before wearing the mask, he probably only had one thought.

'Kill Thronus.'

Why? So he could save me. He wanted to protect me even if he had to sacrifice his sanity. I had to be understanding of it, as I was the only one who could understand him.

Kim Hyun-Sung opened his large mouth and released a silent roar. He looked like he was crying out at me. He was crying out that he would protect me even if he had to sacrifice himself for it. He'd make sure I was safe, even at the cost of his life.

'We can turn you back, right? You remember me, right?'

The problem right now was trying to figure out who could stop Kim Hyun-Sung, but the answer was already there.

"Please help," I requested.

"What?" Thronus questioned.

“P-Please help him,” I said.

“I already told you—”

“No, there's still hope. He can come back to his normal self. The spark in him is still alive,” I interrupted.

“…”

“I won’t ask again about what you want to say, how you know me, and why you're here. However, if you want me to believe you, then please help me. The determination to protect even the tiniest light… show me—show me that you won’t abandon even those corrupted…” I continued.

“…”

“If you help…” I paused.

“…”

“I’ll do whatever you want.” I continued.

“…”

I couldn’t tell whether he agreed or not, but Thronus nodded lightly and rushed toward Kim Hyun-Sung. Obviously, what I said about doing whatever he wanted was just a white lie on my side.

‘Thanks, masked savior.’

CHAPTER 713
SCENARIO (4)

The second round of the fight started, and I stared anxiously at the fight.

I knew Thronus was strong, but I wasn't sure if he could handle Kim Hyun-Sung in his current form. He was winning against Doom Hyun-Sung, but I wasn't sure if he could do the same against Gray Skull Kim Hyun-Sung. The latter was in a different league, and a single injury could prove fatal to Thronus.

Thronus definitely burdened. In addition to the physical exhaustion, I was sure he was mentally exhausted as well. The mental damage he had received when Kim Hyun-Sung awakened to become Gray Skull Kim Hyun-Sung had to have been significant. He wasn't showing it, but I was sure he was exhausted deep inside.

"…"

The figure shrouded in darkness slammed himself into the figure shrouded in silver. The figure shrouded in darkness was haphazardly swinging his arms at an incredible speed, and Thronus no longer looked as relaxed as earlier.

His expression was grim, and the biggest issue was…

'His stamina is in a different league as well.'

Thronus' sword was reaching Kim Hyun-Sung, but it would always bounce off. The silver-haired hero bit his lips and swung his sword with all his might, but his sword would always bounce away upon hitting Kim Hyun-Sung. If it weren't for his extraordinary strength, Thronus would have lost his sword long ago.

The surroundings had been reduced to ruins, and the castle walls had long crumbled.

Kim Hyun-Sung and Thronus' battlefield was bigger and bigger. To make matters worse, whenever Hyun-Sung swung his hand and feet while roaring, the shockwaves of his attack would sweep across the entire battlefield.

Booooooooooooom!!

I wouldn't be surprised if the battlefield became a barren wasteland after this fight.

'It's completely out of control.'

Kim Hyun-Sung couldn't control himself anymore. Thronus would swing his sword, and Kim Hyun-Sung would block it using the horns on his head. I noticed Gray Skull Hyun-Sung swinging his hand, but the next part was the problem. Thronus was out of options. Where was he going to move to dodge the oncoming attack?

'Above? Below? Right? Left?'

A burst of darkness surged from Kim Hyun-Sung's hand, and it pervaded everything in front of him. If Thronus wanted to dodge the oncoming attack, he had to magically teleport behind Kim Hyun-Sung. Wait, no. Kim Hyun-Sung had a tail, so it would be dangerous if Thronus were to teleport there.

Thronus looked like he wanted to block the oncoming attack, but he had to have realized that the attack was too strong for him to block.

In the end, I had no choice but to send a message to Thronus.

[Creating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[Middle. (0/1)]

[An Average-rank quest has been delivered to Thronus. No quest rewards were declared, so Thronus will not receive a reward.]

I was sure he would understand what I was talking about, and I was right. Thronus wrapped himself with his wings and took to the skies. I heard a *whoosh* as he took a stance with his sword and got ready to perform a thrust.

He couldn't dodge or block the oncoming attack, so he had to shatter it. If he were to pierce the attack's weakest part, he'd be able to shatter the oncoming attack. With that in mind, Thronus made his move.

He thrust his sword, shattered the attack, and used the hilt of his sword to hit Kim Hyun-Sung's mask. He used the hilt instead of swinging his sword because he was

too close to Kim Hyun-Sung.

I didn't need to tell him to get out right away because Thronus was also aware that being too close to Kim Hyun-Sung was dangerous.

'He's understanding it well.'

It felt like we had a connection, and it was definitely different from when I was working with Rafael. I felt bad for Rafael, who was on the Jordan River Express, but Thronus was on a completely different level.

'This is nice.'

I didn't need to instruct him from start to finish, and I couldn't really give him constant instructions because the battlefield was unpredictable. It could change directions while I was still composing my messages to him. To make matters worse, the two were moving so fast that I had no choice but to rely on Thronus' performance and judgment.

I felt bad comparing him to Rafael when I had to give explicit instructions to the latter, such as *move here, move there*. Explicit instructions took time to compose, and they were exhausting for me as well, so I had no choice but to make Rafael fight defensively.

Thronus was automatic.

He could make decisions for himself, and he understood what I was thinking. It was to the point that I couldn't choose between Hyun-Sung and him because they were on the same level. They both performed well, too, so it was more about personal preference.

'How about their attack range?'

Thronus' attack range was longer, and I wasn't talking about his sword.

Of course, his sword affected his attack range, but even without a sword, he was a decent fighter at mid-range. His sword was so domineering that it reminded me of shooting stars falling to the ground. He could also use his wings a bit more freely, and although I wasn't sure about this, he seemed to have some sort of *Authority.*

Thronus' movement was unusual. He looked like he was used to unleashing his power, and he had a habit of keeping his guard up at all times. He could be compared to Kim Hyun-Sung, who only knew how to throw heavy punches.

I had no idea how I ended up judging them like this, but I was having a pretty good time.

I had a sports car, yes, but it didn't mean that I couldn't have fun with my second car. My first sports car's exhaust was reminiscent of dinosaur roars, and the maneuverability was great as well. Kim Hyun-Sung was great if I wanted to show off my technique, while Thronus was like a quiet hybrid car. It was a bit more considerate to the driver.

I still thought the former was better, but the latter wasn't too bad.

'And Rafael?'

"It's about time I dump the Holy Sword Coin," I said.

I didn't want to drive him again.

Thronus was moving while I was having many different thoughts. I was sure he was trying to find space because he didn't know where and when to get even closer to Kim Hyun-Sung's attack. I was sure he was preparing to move the moment he received my message.

'A powerful technique.'

The cracks on Gray Skull Hyun-Sung's mask would increase every time Thronus used a powerful technique on him. Like an out-boxer, Thronus orbited Kim Hyun-Sung without stopping and made sure to make the appropriate amount of space.

Kim Hyun-Sung roared again, seemingly getting furious at the fly hanging around him.

His roar inundated the surroundings with dark mana.

My job was simple. Watch and deliver.

The moment Kim Hyun-Sung unleashed an attack, I needed to find a tiny space in the

tsunami-like wave and deliver an instruction to Thronus. It was difficult because I had to make a decision in a split second, but I had no issues finding a weakness.

Thronus wrapped his wings around himself once again and moved according to my instructions. He seemed overjoyed at the fact that I was giving him instructions.

[Creating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[Attack right after breaking through. (0/1)]

[An Average-rank quest has been delivered to Thronus. No quest rewards were declared, so Thronus will not receive a reward.]

'You know what I'm talking about, right?'

Kim Hyun-Sung started moving as well. He instinctively knew that Thronus was going to break through his attack. The dark wolf crouched in the bushes and bared its teeth, but Thronus was ready.

Thronus shattered the attack and changed directions. The timing would've been off if he had moved after seeing Kim Hyun-Sung, but the timing was perfect because he had made a move according to my instructions.

After getting close to Kim Hyun-Sung, he didn't use the hilt of his sword. The crack in Kim Hyun-Sung's mask was so small that I questioned if it was actually a crack, but we had no other choice but to keep on widening that crack.

Thronus could have gone a little further, but he had to maintain his distance.

Kim Hyun-Sung looked impatient, which gave me hope that we would find another opportunity given enough time. As expected, he started sweeping his surroundings as if he were annoyed, and he looked as if he was going to destroy the entire continent, but I knew that he was simply letting his anger out.

It was a good thing I told the field commanders to evacuate everyone.

'Who knew they'd use an entire region as their battlefield?'

[Creating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[I’m sure you’re already aware, but I’ll explain again. Go into the specific locations only once I give you the signal. Please keep your distance from him. You have to be more than your sword's length away from him and focus on going in and out. He’ll more likely use his left hand than the sword in his right hand, so be careful and never go behind him. Watch out for his tail. Don’t be too far from him because it’ll be difficult to approach him again. I’ll keep an eye on the distance so you can just eyeball it. (0/1)]

[An Average-rank quest has been delivered to Thronus. No quest rewards were declared, so Thronus will not receive a reward.]

- Got it.

[Creating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[Please let me know of your powers and abilities. (0/1)]

[An Average-rank quest has been delivered to Thronus. No quest rewards were declared, so Thronus will not receive a reward.]

-…

‘Are you doubting me?’

- I’ll do that.

[Creating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[I’ll give you the signal using Q, W, E, and R. If I say Q, go ahead and attack; if I say W, I want you to use your special skill; if I say E, you have to move according to my instructions, and if I say R, I want you to unleash your power. (0/1)]

[An Average-rank quest has been delivered to Thronus. No quest rewards were declared, so Thronus will not receive a reward.]

- I understand.

Kim Hyun-Sung rushed toward Thronus, and Thronus immediately retreated, crossing the same distance Kim Hyun-Sung had crossed to maintain a certain amount of distance between him and Kim Hyun-Sung.

The way he was moving while covered by his wings meant that he was also aware that Kim Hyun-Sung's attacks were dangerous. It looked like he was buying time, but I didn't think it was that bad.

'It means he has time to analyze Kim Hyun-Sung's patterns.'

Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't a program, so he didn't have an attack pattern. However, he had a habit, and they'd stand out now that he had lost his reason.

I didn't want to acknowledge it, but he was like a monster.

Whenever Thronus swung his sword, he would often swing his claw right afterward.

He would then swing his tail as a distraction before swiping at Thronus' legs. He often used his claws to swipe in front of him, and he didn't really have a way to keep Thronus away from him—wait, no, he could actually do that.

'Yeah, because he has a tail now.'

Unlike Thronus' sword, it was more flexible, which meant that Kim Hyun-Sung's back was basically a no-go zone. Kim Hyun-Sung barely used his legs to kick. In fact, he would use his tail to sweep everything behind him to check if Thronus was there.

It wasn't much, but I immediately sent the data that I had accumulated to Thronus. It became a cycle wherein I would analyze Kim Hyun-Sung's movement and then send explicit instructions to Thronus.

However, there was one thing he needed to be cautious about.

[Creating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[Don't take things at face value. (0/1)]

I didn't want him to rely too much on my information because the fight between them was ever-changing. To make matters worse, the pace was too fast for me to make accurate predictions. I wanted him to doubt at least three percent of my information.

'I think he can do it.'

Honestly, I couldn’t imagine seeing Thronus win, but it was possible for him to remove Kim Hyun-Sung's mask.

‘A little more.’

Thronus kept on hitting the same crack in the mask. It didn’t look like the crack was getting bigger, but we were convinced that it would eventually shatter because Gray Skull Hyun-Sung was getting furious.

Unfortunately, there was an issue with Thronus.

‘He lacked stamina.’

I couldn’t criticize him for it because even if he covered himself with his wings and used the minimum amount of strength to shatter Kim Hyun-Sung's attack, it would still be impossible for him to conserve his stamina.

In addition, he would always throw himself in front of Kim Hyun-Sung once he had shattered the latter's attack, which meant that it was impossible to avoid injuries. Tiny injuries were stacking upon each other, and his wings were starting to grow weaker.

‘I think things are going to get a bit dangerous.’

Could his wings take it?

‘How many times do we have left? Can we shatter the mask in the next breakthrough?’

“*Huh?*”

Platinum-colored chains manifested from out of nowhere and bound Kim Hyun-Sung.

“What’s going on?” I asked.

Platinum-colored swords manifested afterward, and Thronus looked surprised…

- Execute.

The swords pelted Kim Hyun-Sung.

- Execute.

The swords poured down like rain.

- Execute.

-…!

The swords were too weak to injure Kim Hyun-Sung, but the repeated attacks on the same spot eventually managed to injure Kim Hyun-Sung.

He started crying out, but it wasn't because he was angry. He was crying out in pain.

- Execute.

-…!

'What the… Shit.'

- Execute.

-…!

'Stop it, you crazy… '

- Execute.

"Stop it, you crazy pigeons!" I shouted.

An angel with platinum blonde hair appeared above us.

Thronus mumbled his name.

- Stop. Stop it, Seraphim.

- Why?

-…

- He must die, Thronus.

-…

- Tell me why I shouldn’t kill him, Thronus. Was it your idea? Or was it the idea of this dirty traitor who's been sending you messages?

-…

- I have to kill that human.

‘Shit.’

I couldn’t help but bite my lips. I didn't expect that something like this would happen, but…

‘Kill?’

I bit my lips harder when I saw how much pain Kim Hyun-Sung was in, and the uninvited guest's intervention was making me feel nervous.

He was hostile toward us as well. I wasn’t sure if he could kill Kim Hyun-Sung, but it seemed like he could actually do it.

“Shit… shit…” I cursed.

‘Can I get help from outside?’

Where was Cha Hee-Ra? She was still fighting, and it was the same for Lee Ji-Hye. What about Jung Ha-Yan? Impossible—no, it was possible. She could intervene if she were to unleash a spell that would engulf the entire northern region.

‘Should I use her?’

However, I needed to think about it. If Seraphim could kill Kim Hyun-Sung in his current form, then telling her to use that kind of spell was the right choice.

I tried sending more messages to Thronus, but I could feel Seraphim blocking my messages.

I had to grasp at straws, so I had no choice but to look around using the Telescope. I didn’t know why, but Rafael caught my attention. He was a hero, and he had to

protect the continent with Kim Hyun-Sung. He was the holy sword's Chosen, and he was my little brother.

'Shit, wake up, warrior!'

I had to do something. I continued sending messages to Rafael even as I trembled beneath the grayish-white light.

'Wake up, warrior! The hope of the continent!'

Seraphim waved his hand once again.

'Wake up, Rafael.'

Platinum-colored swords manifested and got ready to descend on Kim Hyun-Sung…

'Wake up, warrior!'

"Wake up, you crazy bastard!" I shouted.

- Execute.

"Wake up!" I roared.

A bright platinum-colored light blinded me.

* * *

"…"

"…"

"Hyung?" Rafael said.

CHAPTER 714
SCENARIO (5)

I couldn’t confirm whether Rafael had woken up or not. Actually, it was more like I had no way of confirming it.

‘What if he died? He's still alive, right?’

Of course, the most important thing was Kim Hyun-Sung's status.

The bright platinum-colored light engulfed me. After an unknown amount of time, I saw a figure that looked like a piece of rag. I couldn’t tell whether the figure was moving or if it had stopped moving. I started to feel anxious.

‘Fuck… ’

“I’m sure he’s alive,” I said.

Kim Hyun-Sung's Endurance was extremely high, so he had to be alive. Thronus had given him quite the beatdown, but he remained unscathed, so he had to be alive right now. The platinum pigeon was strong, but there was no way he was strong enough to break through Kim Hyun-Sung's defenses.

Of course, I might just be making excuses for myself. I might just be in denial.

‘Chosen warrior of the holy sword, what are you doing?’

Perhaps my words weren't enough. Should I have written a hymn called *Power Warrior Rafael* and had them play it around the clock just to wake him up?

I started moving toward the dispersing light while having many different thoughts. I was worried that Seraphim was going to use the same attack on me, but that wasn't the case. I figured Thronus was standing in Seraphim's way.

I continued walking while pushing away the light until I saw Kim Hyun-Sung.

"…"

Platinum-colored swords were sticking out of every nook and cranny of his body, making him look like a hedgehog.

"*Uh…"*

"*Uh… uh… uh…"*

My body reacted faster than my mind. I quickly ran to Kim Hyun-Sung and pulled out the swords sticking out of him. He looked so horrible that I was at a loss for words, and I bit my lips powerfully. I could hear a sizzling noise, and I saw that he was burning.

He wasn't moving at all.

"Wake up… Shit, wake up…" I said.

Taking out each and every one of those swords with my hands was a lot of work, and this was the first time I resented my weak body. They had to be pretty deep into his body because it took me a while to pull out even one sword.

"Shit… shit…" I cursed.

My vision was getting blurry from the tears, and it was all because I had never even thought about the idea that Kim Hyun-Sung could die as well. I wasn't even sure if he was breathing. Actually, there was no way he was breathing. Three swords had pierced his neck, but I still pulled them out because I felt like I needed to pull them out.

'Don't die.'

I felt like my hands were riddled with wounds. Yes, my hands were already numb, and I had suffered a few cuts, but I couldn't stop here. A sword was sticking out of his head, but it wasn't that deep because of his hair and horns.

Regardless, this was a fatal wound to any ordinary human out there.

'He's dead, damn it.'

He was dead. The regressor was no more.

“Shit… shit…” I cursed again.

He was dead, so why was I doing this meaningless work? My hands were injured, and my shoulders were in pain, so why was I pulling out these swords sticking out of a corpse? What was the point? He was already dead, so this was meaningless work.

I had to prepare for what was to come, too.

I wanted to survive, so I had to do that, right? I just had to pretend that I was no longer being brainwashed and stand on the Outer God's side. I could then take everyone away with me. There was also Noah's Ark.

No, I couldn't do that. I had to do something before doing anything else. I had to get revenge. These bitches had crossed my bottom line and touched what was mine. I had to rip them to pieces and throw them into the garbage can. Afterward, I could just go back to my original plan. I would kill everyone and start all over again.

I was an idiot as well. I could have become the regressor, so why did I make Kim Hyun-Sung the regressor? I always talked about scenario this, scenario that, but was this not part of the scenario? Could it be that I only watch up to episode three? It didn’t matter anyway. It was over, and I had to prepare for the next part of the scenario. Yeah, I should stop this meaningless nonsense and move on.

“Shit… these swords really don’t want to come out…” I mumbled. I had to prepare for the next part of the scenario. It was the most reasonable decision I could make. “Damn it. Why are these so hard to pull out?”

I had no idea about what was the point of my actions. I knew it was meaningless, but my hands continued to reach for the swords. Every time a sword moved a little, black blood would gush out and splatter over me. His blood was telling me just how much pain he was in, and I couldn’t believe that so much blood was coming out of one person.

It was so ridiculous that I started laughing.

I was shocked that Kim Hyun-Sung didn’t even scream once despite the excruciating pain. I wonder what he was thinking as he was dying. What was this guy thinking while swords were sticking out of him?

Of course, this kind of assumption was meaningless. I was sure he couldn't think about anything because Kim Hyun-Sung looked like a beast.

He was probably just thinking about how painful his wounds were. If he were still conscious, he would probably be happy to see that his suffering was finally over. His long, painful, and miserable life had finally come to an end.

"Screw you," I said.

It was highly likely that he had zero regrets.

"No, I'm sure he had regrets," I said.

I was sure he died with regrets. The past Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't all that different from the current Kim Hyun-Sung. Unlike his past life, where everyone died, many things happened to Kim Hyun-Sung in his second life. He met new people and experienced new things. It was different from his past life, where he had experienced nothing but suffering.

He got himself a hobby and found things he wanted to do. He learned how to enjoy his life on the continent, how to enjoy his vacation, and how to spend his days in a simpler way.

He had experienced hardships due to many incidents, but I was sure he didn't want to die. He definitely wanted to live. The scratch marks he had made on the ground with his fingernails told me how much he wanted to live. The traces of struggle on the ground told me that Kim Hyun-Sung wanted to live. At least… his wings that were covering him seemed to be telling me that he didn't want to die.

"I'm right, aren't I?" I asked.

"…"

"You wanted to live, right? Right? Shit," I cursed.

"…"

"I'm sure that's what you wanted. Yeah, there's no way you wanted to die. If you were thinking negatively, you would have died long ago," I said.

"…"

"I'm sure you wanted to live despite the heavy burden. I mean, you thought it wasn't that bad, right? Your second life was better than you thought, right? So wake up," I told him.

"…"

"Breathe," I said.

"…"

"Breathe, you idiot! You useless bastard! You incompetent bastard!" I shouted.

"…"

"You idiot! I'm an idiot as well! Shit! Why did I trust in an idiot like you? Damn it! Why was I being stupid?! Why did I go through so much trouble? I don't understand why I chose you in the first place. Why did I make you the regressor and make myself go through this bullshit situation again… S-S-Shit…" I stuttered.

"…"

"*Ptooey*. Scummy bastard!" I cursed.

"…"

"Maybe that was a bit harsh. I'm sorry. Breathe already. Are you really dead? Can you not breathe because of that sword sticking out of your neck? I'll pull that out for you. It's really hard to pull out. Maybe the problem is the sword sticking out of your head. Benigoa. Shit, Benigoa. Are you watching?! Are you? Damn it. You guys did this. You guys did! Lucifer, you fuckin' crow!" I complained.

"…"

"You're the same, you crazy crow. I'll show you just how ugly I can get. I must look like a mere ant in your eyes because I'm nothing more than a lowly mortal, but I'll show what happens when you mess with an actual psycho.

"You think this is funny, right? I'm sure this sounds funny to you since I'm just pulling

out the swords while crying like an idiot. But just you wait. Getting backstabbed by the guy you considered a toy will definitely be an incredible sight to behold. I'll make sure that you'll cry as well," I threatened.

"…"

I pulled out the sword sticking out of his neck and raised it. I couldn't even understand what I was saying. After wiping my tears with my sleeve, I fell to the ground.

'Let's think about the next thing.'

An unknown amount of time passed, and Thronus slowly descended in front of me.

"…"

"…"

He looked like he was pitying me and it was understandable because even I thought I was in a bad condition right now. I was covered in Kim Hyun-Sung's blood, and my hands were riddled with injuries.

However, I was sure my face looked more hideous than anything.

"Are…"

What could I say? My memories of him were few, so I couldn't tell him that I had regained my memories. Perhaps maintaining my current condition was the best thing to do here. I was sure he'd do everything for me, so I could just stand by and wait.

"He…" Thronus trailed off.

"…"

"H-He sold his soul…" he said.

"…"

"…"

“I’m sorry,” he apologized.

“…”

“It was unintentional. I tried to stop Seraphim, but I couldn’t do it. I know he was important to you, but we had a reason to do it as well…” he explained.

“…”

“I’m not sure… what I can say to comfort you. How about you come with us for now? Yeah, I think that’s the best thing to do. You look exhausted. I have a place for you to rest,” he suggested.

What should I do? Should I follow him?

“No, Thronus. I don’t agree,” Seraphim said.

“Seraphim.”

Yeah, you. The platinum-colored pigeon. It was you.

“He’s an enemy, Thronus. You just can’t see it because you’re blinded right now. This man has no interest in our cause. Look at his face. Brainwashed? Don’t make me laugh,” Seraphim said.

“He can’t remember anything, Seraphim,” Thronus informed him.

“Then we can check,” Seraphim suggested.

“…”

“No need to be surprised, Thronus. If this man is really as innocent as you say, then there won't be any issues, don’t you agree? I’d like it if this man joined our cause as well. You’re not the only one who wants that. I’m sure Cherubim and Dominions are thinking the same thing as us,” he continued.

“But…”

“But? Is there a need for a *but* right now? I’m just going to check. I’m just going to check how many swords this man’s sins will manifest. Just like that dead scum over

there. He must have committed a myriad of sins to end up like that. It was a fair trial, and that was a fair execution, Thronus," he explained.

"…"

"It's their own fault," he added.

"…"

"It's all because of Kim Hyun-Sung's sins," he said.

"…"

"Now, it's time to judge this man before us, Thronus," Seraphim said.

CHAPTER 715
SCENARIO (6)

“I won’t allow it, Seraphim,” Thronus said.

“I wasn’t asking for your permission, Thronus. This must be done. Do you understand? Or are you scared that he had committed a myriad of sins? Is that what you’re afraid of?” Seraphim asked.

“…”

“…”

“I have faith in him, but…”

“You’re curious, too, Thronus. You want to know how much this traitor has sinned and if this person is even the man you believe him to be. Are you really not curious?” he asked.

“…”

“We need to do this if he wants to join us. It breaks my heart as well, but it can’t be helped. We need to check to see if this man really didn’t betray us and if the demons had truly brainwashed him. We need to know his true intentions and if he’s actually a good person. We need to know this for us to work together.

"I have to do this, Thronus. There’s no room for argument,” Seraphim continued.

“…”

The silver-haired pigeon bit his lips. I knew he would take care of everything, but it seemed like they reached the conclusion faster than I expected. I made a sidelong glance at Kim Hyun-Sung and saw that he was still motionless.

“…”

There were still swords sticking out of him. I thought he'd at least breathe if I removed the swords on his neck and head, but it seemed that it was just wishful thinking. I thought he'd open his eyes during a time of crisis and help me, but he didn't move.

He had probably *judged* Kim Hyun-Sung using those platinum-colored swords.

'I think I know.'

I was just assuming things here, but I was confident that I knew Seraphim's power and how his platinum-colored swords functioned. Of course, it was just an assumption. Still, it was a reasonable assumption, considering how many swords had manifested.

'Kim Hyun-Sung sinned?'

I was sure he had committed a sin. I wasn't sure if his sin was based on Seraphim's standards or the standards of the universe, but I was sure Kim Hyun-Sung had sinned at least once in his life. He had murdered people while fighting on the battlefield and ignored people in need of help for the sake of living.

There were definitely incidents he had kept hidden from me, but his sins couldn't possibly be that heavy for him to end up getting pierced by so many swords. There were just too many swords sticking out of him. In fact, the entire battlefield was covered in those platinum-colored swords.

'No way.'

If the sins were based on the pigeon's standard, then I would understand it. Things that weren't considered *sins* based on human standards could be considered sins in their eyes. If they considered consuming natural resources and disturbing the balance of the continent as sins, then Kim Hyun-Sung's outcome made sense.

However, I had to deny it.

I acknowledge the fact that Seraphim was a transcendent being, but the pigeons weren't perfect. Even gods and demigods weren't perfect either. There was no way he had the power to pass judgment by judging the sins one had committed throughout one's life as if he were some teacher grading a student's answer sheet.

It was a power that was so broken it could probably control every single citizen of a dimension. If he could somehow create a system called Judgment of Sin or something, he'd be stronger than Benigoa and the other gods up there.

'Kim Hyun-Sung's sin? Bullshit. He's just crazy.'

I pushed aside the ridiculous assumption, and the next assumption that popped up into my head was that Seraphim's ability judged one's guilt rather than their sins. It was also possible that perhaps Kim Hyun-Sung was the one who had judged himself rather than Seraphim.

If that was the case, the number of swords that had manifested would make sense. I couldn't say that I had deduced the right answer, but it was highly likely that I was right. The idea that the myriad of swords that had manifested represented Kim Hyun-Sung's guilt made me feel sad, but their numbers made sense now.

Kim Hyun-Sung had to have remembered his mistakes and recalled the faces of the people he had to kill. The countless mistakes he had made had to have been hiding in the deepest recesses of his heart. Actually, it was possible that the people whom Kim Hyun-Sung had killed were the ones who had judged him.

However, a crime without victims? Was a system like that even viable?

It'd be a different story if a transcendent god, which was above the gods humans had made for themselves, had created a Supreme Court-like system where they pounded a hammer to judge others.

Fortunately, Seraphim wasn't that strong.

Even if all the complicated things were ignored and Kim Hyun-Sung was only held responsible for the murder charges, that bastard still didn't have the ability to judge him like that. He was the one who said that they needed to control the population of the continent in the first place, so how could he judge someone for murder?

That bastard was no god. He was nothing but a vagrant beggar wandering between dimensions because he had no place to call home.

'Fuckin' fraud.'

I finally understood what was going on.

Seraphim was a clever fraud—no, he was just an idiot. He was too dumb to be a fraud. He was an idiot who thought his ability was capable of judging someone for their sins. I could tell just from looking at his face. Seraphim seemed certain of it. He believed that his ability could really distinguish between good and evil in humans.

'Fine, do it.'

I wasn't sure if my assumption was correct, but the dice had already left my hand. If Seraphim was a transcendent god powerful enough to create a system like that, then it was over. How could I fight a transcendent god?

'The platinum-colored pigeon is not a god. He's just an idiot.'

I smiled lightly. I wasn't certain yet, but I had a feeling that Kim Hyun-Sung would come back to life.

"Judgment," Seraphim said.

'Judgment, my ass. Stop talking bullshit. I haven't sinned.'

"Judgment," he repeated.

'I haven't sinned, you crazy pigeon. I'm the most innocent person.'

"Judgment?"

'Maybe I sinned a few times, but they were all noble sacrifices for humanity.'

"…"

'It was a bigger picture so that everyone can be happy. All the bastards I killed deserved to be killed, and I'm going to go out on a limb and say that I contributed to controlling the human population. Don't you agree? You know better than that, so let's not do this. I'm right, aren't I? You don't have the ability to judge people. Actually, even if you can judge people, you're too weak to build a system like I had imagined.'

Seraphim looked flustered, and then he frowned in disbelief. He seemed to be questioning if there was something wrong with his power. I was glad that my assumption ended up being correct. *Ah*, there were a few things I needed to do because there were things I needed to deal with, too.

Who hadn't committed even a single sin throughout their life? I needed to react to his power a bit because that was the natural thing to do. It would be too strange if an ordinary human being were too clean.

What kind of things would make me feel guilty? I hadn't thought about it, but I'm sure I have something. If I had to count, I'd say there were about five—no, six.

When I thought about the incidents that made me feel guilty, platinum-colored swords appeared in the sky.

Seraphim finally looked satisfied. One, two, three. There were exactly six swords. As the masked savior, I thought this was a bit too much, but it was a realistic number. They were incidents I could accept, and… Thronus looked a bit relieved.

"Six swords…" I mumbled.

"This is unrealistic. A human… How could a human… Only six swords…" Seraphim muttered.

"No, it's realistic, Seraphim. All of us know exactly what kind of person he is. *Ha… haha.* This is why we accepted him. He was so pure that we managed to trust him. He could understand us because he had always been that kind of person," Thronus chimed in.

"…"

"I'm sure this is enough to satisfy even you, Seraphim. Come here and take my hand," he said.

"No, it's not over yet, Thronus," Seraphim said.

"What?"

"Judgment," he cast.

"Seraphim!" Thronus shouted.

The six swords made a beeline for me. Thronus flew toward me and extended his sword to block the oncoming swords. It happened so fast that I couldn't react quickly enough to see a sword flying toward me. I couldn't dodge it. I felt a sharp pain in my

shoulder. It was hot and painful; I felt like the wound was getting roasted over fire.

It was really painful, and I screamed without realizing it. It hurt so much that I started questioning if I had ever felt this much pain in my entire life until now.

I bit my lips, but I couldn't stop groaning from the pain.

'It's this painful?'

Shit…

'Really?'

How did Kim Hyun-Sung hold in his scream? I only got hit by one sword, but I was already screaming. Tears started welling up in my eyes against my will, and I was having a hard time breathing. I was feeling dizzy, and I couldn't think of anything else. I had no idea how that corpse on the ground had managed to hold in his screams.

"Are you okay? A-Are you okay?" Thronus asked.

"…"

Thronus looked nervous, but I couldn't really see his face because I was in *that* much pain. I was sure this pain was the most excruciating pain one could ever feel.

"What was that, Seraphim?!" Thronus questioned.

"…"

"I asked you what was that, Seraphim?!" he shouted.

"I was just doing my job, Thronus," Seraphim answered.

"…"

"Lay down your sword and calm down, Thronus. As I said, I was just doing my job, and it was only one sword. He was supposed to take six swords, but I decided to let it go because of you," he continued.

“Seraphim…” Thronus mumbled.

“If he's really thinking about joining us, then there’s no need to erase his sins. With that one sword in his shoulder, he's going to be reborn. You’re right, Thronus. You guessed it right. We’re going to accept this man again. I don’t know what Cherubim will think, but I’m sure Dominions will agree with us,” he explained.

“Y-You…”

“It’s time for you to stop acting selfish, Thronus. You got what you wanted. He’s clean, so how about we treat his wound?” he suggested.

That’s when Thronus rushed over to me, pulled out the sword, and started treating me with his holy power.

“I’m sorry. I’m sure it was painful,” Thronus said.

‘Yeah. Now I know how painful it is after getting stabbed by one.’

“Are you okay?” he asked.

‘Do you think I’m okay? You crazy pigeon. Does it look like I’m okay?’

“You don’t have to worry anymore. You will no longer be persecuted,” he said.

“If you’re done treating him, let’s head back, Thronus. Grab my hand, human,” Seraphim offered.

My wound had healed completely.

I hesitated, so he grabbed my hand and pulled me up in a pretty forceful way, but right now, there was nothing I could do. Actually, there was one thing I could do.

I didn’t know if this was even going to work, but I had to do it, even though the possibility was close to zero.

The person who could treat Kim Hyun-Sung was coming.

It seemed that the only thing I could do was send messages.

[Creating a Legendary-rank Forced Quest.]

[I forgive your sins. Wake up, Regressor of Altanus. (0/1)]

[Delivering a legendary-ranked quest to Kim Hyun-Sung, the regressor of Altanus. A reward for clearing the quest has been registered.]

[A Legendary-rank quest has been delivered to Kim Hyun-Sung, the Regressor of Altanus. A quest reward has been declared.]

[Quest Completion Reward -… (0/1)]

[Declaring the reward for quest completion…]

[Quest Completion Reward - The Future (0/1)]

The future…

CHAPTER 716
ALPS (1)

Mankind ended up getting defeated, but it wasn't a complete defeat. It was better to say that we were in a temporary truce. I[1] had no idea why the demons wearing angel masks had gradually become less aggressive, but the ones in the northern region had stayed put for some reason.

For the sake of the allied troops' morale, the Continental Protection Management Committee had publicly announced that we would keep on protecting the continent, but the people knew that the Committee had lied, as the sub guild master had gone missing while the corrupted guild master was dead.

We didn't see it with our own eyes, but the reaction of the senior guild members made it clear just what kind of fate the guild master had suffered. The guild was gloomy, and no one had any idea what to say to cheer everyone up.

Of course, the fact that the sub guild master had gone missing and the guild master had died missing was a fact that only a few guild members knew. The ones aware of it were myself, Acting Guild Master Jo Hye-Jin, Miss Kim Mi-Young, Mr. Chang-Ryeol, Miss Ah-Young, and Miss Park Lian.

I had an idea why they had decided to hide it, but I questioned if I really deserved to be a part of the group who knew about it. I thought about it hard and long before coming to the conclusion that they simply lacked manpower.

Everyone was exhausted after the short battle, and I was sure they wanted to get help, even from a new guild member. Out of all of them, Miss Jung Ha-Yan's condition was especially bad.

'It's understandable.'

She had made sure that the spell she had cast on the entire northern region would last for at least a few days. I was aware that her mana was boundless, all thanks to her superhuman mana recovery rate.

Regardless, I believed that she'd eventually get burned out.

I knew what mana exhaustion felt like, and I didn't want to experience that soul-rending pain again. I felt a shiver down my spine at the thought that Jung Ha-Yan had been repeatedly experiencing such a harrowing experience.

"*Whine…*"

"I'm okay, so don't worry," I said.

"*Woof! Woof!*"

"I should hurry? Yeah, you're right. I have a lot to do today. Miss Jung Ha-Yan is probably waiting for me," I said.

I started walking nervously.

As the new member of the guild, my job was to check on Miss Jung Ha-Yan's condition, who had locked herself up in her room as well as take care of her. This wasn't my first visit, but I was still nervous.

When I first joined the guild, she greeted me kindly, but…

'There's no need to be scared.'

I figured it made sense, as she was currently in a corner mentally.

I knocked on the door while feeling slightly nervous, and I heard a grating noise that sounded like someone was scratching a blackboard with their fingernails.

"…"

"O-O-Oppa?" Jung Ha-Yan said.

"*H-Huh?* N-No. It's me, Miss Jung Ha-Yan. It's Alps," I answered.

I was scared to look up.

After a few moments of silence, a hand appeared below the door, and the hand had been stripped of all moisture to the point that I wondered if it was the hand of a

living human being.

However, I knew that it was one of the symptoms of severe mana exhaustion.

“C-Can I come in?” I asked.

“…”

“…”

“W-What should I do? *Ah*… o-okay, Sora. Yeah, c-come in carefully. Be careful when you come in. D-Don’t step on Sora,” Jung Ha-Yan warned.

“Okay,” I said.

I opened the door and entered slowly. The first thing I saw was Miss Sora, who had been turned into a tree. It wasn't my first time seeing her, but I still couldn't quite get used to such a horrible sight.

Miss Jung Ha-Yan standing next to her was wearing a hoodie that covered her entire body, so I couldn’t check her condition properly. One thing I was sure of was that she looked like she was having a hard time breathing. Her hair, which had turned white, fell out in clumps, and her frame seemed even smaller than before.

To make things worse, she was starting to become hunchbacked.

“D-D-Did you bring the Mana Recovery Potion?” Jung Ha-Yan asked.

“No. The sub guild master said… that you should only drink one bottle of the Mana Recovery Potion a day. He said it’s not good for your health if you consume too much of it, and you already consumed a bottle this morning. I'm here to… clean your room and take care of a few things,” I replied.

“I-I-Is he coming?” she asked.

“I told him… that you were really tired and that you were sleeping,” I answered.

“R-Really? That’s a relief,” she said.

“C-Can you take care of Shiro for now?” I requested.

"…"

I saw Shiro quietly sitting next to Miss Jung Ha-Yan.

'I'm sure Shiro will help her.'

Not only did Shiro have the ability to recover stamina and mana, but he could stabilize her mentally, so I was sure he'd be a huge help.

However, Miss Jung Ha-Yan didn't show any reaction.

'She'll be fine, right?'

Shiro wagged his tail excitedly, and Miss Jung Ha-Yan finally placed her hand on his head.

"W-W-What's oppa doing?" she asked.

"A-as usual. He's really busy… and he's really exhausted because of the meetings…" I answered.

"R-Right… W-When is the war going to resume?" she questioned.

"He didn't tell me because he said it's top secret, but I heard him saying that it was going to resume soon… and that the allied forces were thinking of other ways… He was also considering doing a preemptive strike. H-He said he wanted you to rest for now and don't worry about anything else for the time being. He said that your rest is the most important here…" I told her.

"O-Okay. Sora said I should rest as well," she said.

"You two get along so well," I commented.

"R-Right?" she stuttered.

"Yes. I can tell just by how Miss Sora looks at you, Miss Jung Ha-Yan. I can tell even now," I answered.

"Really?" she asked.

“Yes.”

“I-I’m glad. *Hehe*,” she giggled.

“I have friends like her back home as well,” I told her.

“*Ahh…* r-really?” she asked.

“Yes. We live far apart now, but in the past, we were always together. We were like sisters. We fought a lot and hurt each other’s feelings, but we’ve been friends for a really long time. When I look at you and Miss Sora, I’m reminded of my friends. *Ah,* you need to eat,” I said.

“I-I-I don’t want to eat…” she mumbled.

“You should still eat something. Miss Han Sora is saying you should eat something as well.” I pointed out.

“…”

“W-W-What’s it like outside?” Jung Ha-Yan asked.

“I think the demons are having a hard time getting close because of the mist that the Mist Summoner had cast upon the battlefield. I haven’t heard anything about exactly what the situation is like. Do you want me to ask? *Ah*, the Mercenary Queen woke up yesterday. I thought she was in critical condition because her injury was serious, but she recovered quickly. I don’t think Mr. Park Deok-Gu was hurt that badly during the defense battle… Things haven't really changed,” I replied.

“I-I’m glad,” she stuttered.

“Not a lot of people got hurt… the demons also failed to cross the boundary we've established, even though many cities have been destroyed, so they’ve determined that we won the first battle. It’ll probably be difficult for the demons to get closer from now on, so don’t worry and focus on recovering,” I explained.

“O-Okay… S-Sora said that I look really exhausted as well…” she said.

“I heard it, too. Everyone is worried about your health. I want you to be healthy as well,” I told her.

“Tha—”

“I think Shiro agrees with me,” I added.

“*Woof!*”

“Y-Yeah, thanks,” she said.

‘It looks like her condition improved a lot.’

I couldn’t help but think that my efforts from the past few days were finally paying off. At first, Miss Jung Ha-Yan was so closed off that I couldn’t have a conversation with her. It was also really hard trying to stop her from going to the battlefield. Now, I could have a proper conversation with her, and I considered it a huge success.

As I continued watching her eat after cleaning her room, she nodded when I continued talking to her. It wasn’t hard trying to find things to talk about because even if I didn’t start the conversation, Miss Jung Ha-Yan would start talking first.

“S-S-So… w-we decided to live together, and O-oppa agreed to it,” Jung Ha-Yan said.

“That’s amazing,” I commented.

“Y-Yeah. I-I feel kind of bad for him, but… S-S-Sora was being… stubborn…” she continued.

“If all of you really end up living together, be sure to invite me for the housewarming,” I told her.

“Yeah, I’ll… invite you s-since we’re in the same guild,” she answered.

“I’m really happy hearing you say that,” I said.

“*Woof!*”

As time passed, Miss Jung Ha-Yan started falling asleep. It was still midday, but it wasn’t strange at all. It was actually pretty natural because her body was demanding sleep so that it could recover.

“Would you like to sleep?” I asked.

“Yeah…” Jung Ha-Yan mumbled.

“Should I prepare the bed for you?” I asked.

“No, I-I want to… sleep here…” she answered.

“Then I’ll get you a blanket,” I said.

“O… kay.”

“…”

After placing a blanket over Miss Jung Ha-Yan, who was half-leaning against the tree to sleep, I started heading outside. Even Shiro was being cautious in his movements. I patted his head lightly and made a decision

‘Miss Jo Hye-Jin.’

“I’ll go submit my report,” I mumbled.

“*Woof.*”

I knocked on the office door that was located not too far away from me

"Wait a moment." I heard a voice from behind the door.

Soon, the door opened. I looked around and saw that the windows were open. It seemed that she had a visitor. Of course, that was none of my business because it wasn’t part of my responsibilities.

“…”

“…”

She looked the same as always, with her hair tied up. Miss Jo Hye-Jin had to have noticed that I was nervous because she immediately started talking. Her serious and soft voice sounded as if she was being considerate of me.

“How is she?” Jo Hye-Jin asked.

“I think she recovered a lot, but her mana hasn’t recovered yet… She seems a lot more stable than before… Basically, I don’t think we need to worry about her anymore. Her mana recovery rate is really high, so I’m sure she’ll recover in no time, and she has stabilized,” I answered.

“Thank you for your hard work,” she said.

“No problem. I-It’s the only thing I can do…” I mumbled.

“It’s not something anyone can do, so you don’t have to humble yourself like that. You’re a competent person,” she complimented.

“*Ah…* thank you,” I said.

“About today’s schedule…”

“Yes?”

She didn’t waver.

‘Is she okay?’

Miss Jo Hye-Jin was like a spear; she seemed unbreakable with an unyielding will.

‘Is she… Is she really okay?’

It was amazing how she was still calm and composed. I could tell she was trying not to mix the pressure that was weighing her down and her emotions with her work. I understood why she had a key position in the Blue Guild, which was considered to be the most important guild of the continent. However, for some reason, she looked like she was on the cusp of breaking down. If I were to be extreme, she seemed to be in a worse condition than Miss Jung Ha-Yan.

‘She needs help.’

I couldn’t help but feel frustrated because I had no idea how to help her.

“That’s all,” Jo Hye-Jin said.

“If I find anything special, I’ll submit another report,” I said.

“Okay.”

Even after closing the office door, it was hard for me to leave. Soon, I heard sobbing inside the office, and her sobbing was so piercing it almost sounded like a scream. She sounded sad—really sad.

---

1. Alps’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 717
ALPS (2)

'Should I go in and check up on her?'

I was worried that I might be crossing the line, but I wanted to go in and comfort Miss Jo Hye-Jin by telling her that it was fine and that she was doing great.

However, I felt uncomfortable knocking and entering the room.

'I'm nothing special, so how can I comfort her?'

Actually, I didn't even know what to tell her.

'Should I tell her that I understand her?'

How could I understand Miss Jo Hye-Jin's feelings? She had lost her closest friend and the man she loved at the same time, so she was obviously mourning. She was pretending to maintain her composure to look like she was fine, but I was sure that she was at her limit.

.If there was someone else who could support her, I was sure she'd accept their help, but that wasn't the case. Miss Lee Ji-Hye of the Continental Protection Management Committee? She had been spending time with Miss Jo Hye-Jin recently, but she was still unconscious.

I felt like someone needed to take care of her. I wasn't some psychotherapist or specialist, but Miss Jo Hye-Jin was in a corner and needed someone willing to lend her their shoulder.

'I was the same.'

What I had experienced could surely not compare to the pain she was feeling at the moment, but everyone would inevitably go through such a painful time. If Shiro hadn't come to me when I was struggling to the point that I wanted to die…

I looked down and saw Shiro wagging his tail.

It sounded like the crying noise was gradually dying down, but…

'Let's still check on her.'

It was a rude thing to do, but when I knocked, I heard her alarmed voice.

"H-Hold on."

However, I had to open the door immediately because I was sure she'd act like nothing was going on. She'd wipe her tears and calm herself down. She'd greet me with her usual expression and tone of voice.

"Miss Jo Hye-Jin?" I called out.

"…"

"Miss Jo Hye-Jin," I repeated.

I expected her to look disheveled, but she looked even worse than I thought. What caught me off guard wasn't her tear-stricken face but the blood flowing down her thigh. The wound made me wonder if a beast had bitten her, but this wasn't the first time this happened. Even if one were to stab the same wound again and again, it wouldn't look as horrendous as Jo Hye-Jin's wound. The stab wound was so horrible I couldn't describe it with words.

I blanked out, but I immediately realized how that wound came to be.

'A self-inflicted wound.'

That was all I could think of based on the situation…

Miss Jo Hye-Jin looked embarrassed while crying, but her embarrassment soon turned into anger. A wave of pressure burst out of her and weighed down on me. The pressure was so intense and heavy that I found it hard to breathe. Indeed, she was a high-ranking adventurer of the continent.

I became disoriented beneath the extreme pressure and great malice directed at me.

“What…” Jo Hye-Jin said.

“I-I…”

“What do you think you’re doing?!” she shouted.

That was my line. I wanted to ask her what she was doing, but I couldn’t speak properly. I could only watch her hide her wound. The fear that had gripped my heart made me freeze up. My eyes were filled with tears before I realized it, and my legs grew weak. My lower jaw started to tremble, and I was covered in cold sweat.

When I felt like I was about to lose my mind, I heard a loud bark.

The pressure slowly dispersed, and my tremors instantly calmed down. I opened my eyes a bit wider and looked at Miss Jo Hye-Jin. I had no idea where I got this courage from, as I was usually timid, but I spoke courageously.

“I-I’d like to ask you the same thing. W-What are you doing, Miss Jo Hye-Jin?!”

“…”

“W-Where did that wound come from?” I questioned.

“It’s nothing for you to worry about,” Jo Hye-Jin answered.

“How can I not worry…” I argued.

“Leave this room right now. That’s an order,” she said.

“I-I’m not leaving,” I stuttered.

“Leave,” she repeated.

“No, I won’t,” I said.

“Leave, damn it!” she shouted.

“I won’t…”

Bang!

I was sent flying. I had no idea what happened, but my back and chest were aching.

“Are you disobeying my order? I told you to leave,” she said.

After suppressing me with one hand, Miss Jo Hye-Jin looked down at me with a glare. There were tears in her eyes, and I couldn’t understand what she was feeling. Sadness, anger, and self-hatred were written on her face.

“It’s okay,” I told her.

“What…”

“Everything will be okay,” I added.

“…”

“Everything will be fine,” I said.

I had no idea if things would get better and if the pain she was feeling would disappear, but I had to say something. My words were born out of desperation because I had no idea how to comfort her, but I was hoping my words would comfort her even just a little bit. After all, I had been in her shoes long ago. When I was really struggling, someone told me that things would be fine, and their words helped me a lot.

And that was exactly why I decided to keep telling her that things would get better.

“E-Everything will be… fine. I-It hasn’t been long since I joined the guild and… I don’t know what you’re feeling or how much pain you’re in… and I don’t know if what I’m saying right now even fits, but… it’ll be okay. I’m certain you’ll overcome it,” I told her.

“It’s not okay,” Jo Hye-Jin mumbled.

“…”

“I-It’s not okay at all,” she added.

Tears were falling, and I wiped her tears without realizing it.

I hugged her tight, and she continued to sob.

“I-It was my fault,” she confessed.

“…”

“I-I couldn’t stop anything… *Heuk*… I couldn’t… *Kgh…* Nothing… I…” she mumbled.

“…”

“I-I…”

“…”

“I… I… *Kgh… Heuk…* I was a stupid… and an incompetent bitch… this time too,” she cursed.

She was choking up, so she couldn’t speak properly.

“I-I knew, but… I… couldn’t stop…” she stuttered.

“…”

“I-I…”

“It’s not your fault, Miss Jo Hye-Jin,” I told her.

“I’m just… stupid…” she said.

“There’s no need for you to blame yourself… and handle all of this by yourself. I’m sure no one blames you for what happened. I-I’m sure of it. You don’t have to blame yourself,” I said.

I rubbed some potion on her wound while talking, and Miss Jo Hye-Jin grimaced. It was part of the treatment, but I was sure it stung. I wasn’t sure if that pain had helped her come back to her senses a bit, but she was starting to quiet down.

I looked up and saw a furious blush on her cheeks. It wasn't strange for her to get embarrassed, as I had just caught her in the act of harming herself. She was crying a lot as well.

She was also embarrassed for blasting me away and for looking down at me with a glare. I was sure she found it shameful that she had shown her weak side to a new guild member.

She was probably regretting what she had done under the influence of her emotions.

'It's better to be shameless at times like this.'

"I-I can do it by myself," Jo Hye-Jin said.

She needed to be even more shameless, and I needed to let her know. I needed to tell her that she could lean on me.

"No, I can do it. I'll even wrap the bandage for you. I'm used to it because of Shiro," I told her.

"*Woof!*"

"…"

"…"

"I'm sorry. I… made a mistake…" Jo Hye-Jin apologized.

"No, it should be me who should apologize. I-I was kind of rude, right?" I asked.

"…"

"I still wanted to tell you. I know there are a lot of things I can't do… I'm weak… and I'm still trying to fit in because I haven't adapted to the guild yet, but… still… I thought… I could help somehow… I know I'm lacking, but… I wanted to support you somehow…" I explained.

"…"

"N-Not long after I joined the guild—no… during my first interview, the guild master told me this," I paused

"…"

“He told me to let people know that I’m struggling. It didn’t matter who, as long as I told someone. If I had a close friend, I should talk to that friend, or if I had someone that I considered a brother or sister, I should talk to them and rely on them.

"If I do that, I’ll feel less burdened, my body will feel lighter and more energetic, and I’ll have the power to endure it… He told me that carrying the heavy burden would become fun as well. I obviously knew that, but the guild master’s face when he told me that—he looked so confident that I unknowingly nodded a few times,” I told her.

“…”

“I also wanted to be that kind of person to someone. Someone who can share the sadness and carry the burden together with someone else. I-I may make a lot of mistakes and am stupid, but… if you don’t mind, I’d like to share that pain you’re feeling… So… can I do that for you?” I asked.

I didn’t hear an answer. I was worried that she was going to scold me for being arrogant, but she nodded slowly. It was a sign of approval, right? She approved, right? I couldn’t help but smile. Tears welled up in my eyes out of relief that I had comforted her a bit. I wasn’t sure if it was because the tension eased, but I suddenly felt exhausted.

I was embarrassed because I thought my tears were falling on her bandage, so I quickly wiped my tears.

Fortunately, Miss Jo Hye-Jin changed the topic.

“*Um*…”

“Yes?”

“There’s a place I’d like you to go with me. This isn’t an order but a request,” she said.

“Of course. Where are we going?” I asked.

“…”

“…”

“To where the guild master is,” she replied.

"…"

I remained silent for a moment because I had no idea how to respond.

"The guild master may survive."

"…"

"I'm not sure if it's really possible to save him, but… the guild master is currently receiving treatment. The person that's treating him is someone you know very well," she said.

It was unexpected, but it was great news.

The guild master was still alive and was receiving treatment.

"Rafael," she said.

"*Ah*."

"It's Rafael," she repeated.

Goddess Benigoa had once said, *"The continent's chosen warrior will wield the holy sword and fight against the demons of darkness pretending to be angels. The chosen warrior will stand on the left of the hero wielding a sword glowing in the light of sunset, and they will save humanity from darkness."*

"The prophecy…" I muttered as the words I heard long ago popped into my mind.

CHAPTER 718
ALPS (3)

The gray warrior chosen by the holy sword.

'Rafael.'

I[1] knew that name well.

I also worked hard to be chosen by the holy sword. I had never really talked to him, but it would be a lie if I were to say that I wasn't jealous of him. I admired him as well, and that was it. I could still remember the deep evil and darkness that pierced my mind when I grabbed that sword. I couldn't tell the difference between light and darkness back then, and it felt like maggots had ripped into my skin to tear through my intestines…

'I don't want to experience it again.'

How could I take interest in someone who managed to overcome what I couldn't overcome?

The window had opened right before I entered the room, and I suddenly realized the identity of that guest. I didn't bother asking, but it was probably *him*, and I was sure he was probably heading toward the gray warrior.

I couldn't see properly because of the thick fog, and the party members seemed really nervous. I was nervous as well because we were in a danger zone. We were in a devastated and polluted area filled with the deep stench of evil.

Staying here was making me feel the same emotions I felt when I faced the trial of the holy sword. Rage, regret, despair, fear, and darkness, along with all sorts of negative emotions. I wasn't sure if it was a proper description, but that was what this place made me feel. I knew I had to remain as quiet as possible, but I had to say something.

"Is the guild master… really still alive?" I asked.

“Honestly…” Jo Hye-Jin paused.

“Yes?”

“His body has completely stopped functioning. He’s not breathing, and his heart has stopped beating. Scientifically, he’s dead,” she continued.

“Then…”

“However, there’s still mana in his body. As you know, when a person dies, their body…”

“*Ah!* Mana doesn't flow through a corpse,” I interrupted.

“When we first discovered the guild master, there wasn’t a drop of mana in his body, but three hours later… we felt mana stirring inside of him. However, it’s not like he started breathing again. The reason this land is tainted right now is…”

“Because of the mana inside the guild master,” I said.

“…”

She didn’t answer, but she nodded lightly. I was sure she was also finding it hard to grasp what was going on, but I was most curious about the essence of that power. I didn’t know exactly how much was affected, but an area large enough to cover almost an entire city and more was rotting away.

All I could say was that the environment had changed.

I know the guild master had died after getting corrupted, but…

‘Is he really still alive?’

And would he still be the same guild master that we got to know even if we somehow managed to rescue him? What if he became a completely different person?

Actually, even if there was a way to save him, was going through with it the right choice? I thought I finally knew why this was kept a secret.

If the Order of Benigoa and the other religious groups found out about the guild

master's corruption, I'm sure they wouldn't stay quiet about it. After all, we might be…

'Trying to revive a demon.'

Of course, I was probably just getting worried for no reason at all, but the moment I saw him in his beast-like form, I couldn't help but think about the assumptions I had made.

He was too far gone to be called a human, and he was no different from the demons that the adults described to me to scare me into staying in the house when I was still a child.

His large horns were hideous and ominous; the wings on his back were twisted in a strange way. I could no longer see the face of the guild master whom I got to know.

However, the wounds in his body caught my attention more than anything else. Moreover, his body was already rotting, and the stench unknowingly made me bite my lips and hold my breath.

I could see it…

He looked like a tattered rag, and I started doubting if he could move even if we somehow managed to revive him. His body was covered in sword wounds, and his strangely twisted body told us just how much he had suffered before he died.

'Can they… really save him?'

His blood was everywhere, and I couldn't move at all. I couldn't even speak properly, and I felt like I finally understood why Miss Jo Hye-Jin asked me to come with her.

'How… How can you look at something so tragic like this?'

How could someone look at that without flinching? I glanced to the side and saw Miss Jo Hye-Jin, but I couldn't describe how she was feeling. She was trembling uncontrollably. I grabbed her hand quietly, and she started to calm down.

"His condition was worse when I first saw him. Right now, he's…" Jo Hye-Jin paused.

"His condition has improved."

I turned around toward the voice that echoed not too far away from us and saw a face I hadn't seen in a while. The first thing that caught my attention was the holy sword, which was the symbol of the warrior and then his blond hair.

It was Rafael, the gray warrior chosen by Goddess Benigoa.

“You said you weren’t going to come here…” he said.

“I changed my mind,” said Jo Hye-Jin.

“I’m glad, Miss Jo Hye-Jin. *Ah*, you’re… you’re Miss Alps, right? It’s been a while,” he greeted.

“Yes, it’s been a while, Mr. Rafael. I would’ve come to greet you if I knew you had awakened,” I greeted.

“No, it’s fine. I came here as soon as I regained consciousness… I heard my hyung calling for me,” he said.

“Your hyung?” I asked.

“Yes, the sub guild master of the Blue Guild…” he answered.

“*Ah*.”

“I received an unexpected message. He asked me to save this man and that I’m the only one who can,” he said.

“That’s…”

“What do you think, Mr. Rafael? Have you…”

“I haven’t received any message after that. Not a single one after I regained consciousness. I didn’t get an answer about what I should do or how I should do it, but I knew I had to do this… Of course, I’m not sure if I’m even doing the right thing right now, but… he gave me this task,” he explained.

“The guild master’s condition…” she asked.

“It’s exactly as you see it. The gray holy power is healing his wounds, and it’s a relief

that it's not rejecting it like ordinary holy power, but…" he paused.

"If it's working, that's all that matters," she commented.

"Yes, that's true…"

I saw other people besides the gray warrior. I couldn't really remember them, but the man keeping his guard up was probably Lee Joo-Hyuk, the hunting dog. The one maintaining a safe zone using holy power was…

'Marian, the miracle priest.'

I saw other familiar faces as well. They were called the Holy Sword Warrior's Party. I didn't see all of them, but I was sure they had spent a lot of time at the guild. I even saw Choi Young-Ki of the Red Mercenary Guild and…

'The Guild Master of the Black Swan Guild?'

I noticed her talking to Miss Jo Hye-Jin.

I wondered if I should go and greet her, but I knew this wasn't the time for that because everyone was extremely nervous right now. Miss Park Yeon-Joo, the Holy Sword Warrior's Party, Mr. Choi Young-Ki of the Red Mercenary Guild, and other powerful people had the same nervous expression.

Of course, it wasn't because of the guild master before us. I was sure they realized that the enemy could break in and attack us at any moment.

'How long were we walking before we arrived here?'

Where were we? The enemy could attack us at any moment because even though this place was covered in fog, there weren't any walls around us. The safety zone that was created using magic and holy power wasn't strong enough to block the enemies' attacks.

If the demons wearing angel masks came rushing in…

'We would be in danger.'

The anxiety I was feeling for the first time caused my hands to become clammy. The

fog was also giving off an ominous air.

"*Yelp!*"

Shiro's eyes were fixed on something far away while whining.

I looked in the direction he was looking at and saw a masked man looking our way.

"*Huh?*"

They were so far away that I couldn't tell if what I saw was a human being. Perhaps I was just imagining it. When I rubbed my eyes and looked again, the masked man had disappeared and was replaced by the thick fog.

'Was I seeing things?'

Perhaps it was best to investigate it. The man was wearing a mask, and I wondered why he was staring at us.

"*Yelp…"*

I was about to tell the nearest adventurer about what I saw when—

"Prepare for battle!" "…"

"All units prepare for battle!"

"*Woof! Woof!*"

"Shiro!" I called out.

—an explosion echoed from somewhere.

"Mages, prepare to cast your spells!"

"They've discovered us. Requesting reinforcements. We do not know how many of them are out there."

"We'll move based on the manual."

The atmosphere changed immediately, and the mages started chanting their own incantations. The atmosphere became heavy, and I quickly unsheathed the sword that was at my waist.

I noticed a demon in the form of an angel cutting through the fog and attacking us with its spear.

'I can dodge it.'

My body slightly froze due to the nervousness, but I could easily dodge its attack.

"*Woof!*"

As soon as I heard Shiro's bark, I felt light. I became faster and more powerful. I thrust my sword toward the demon's heart, but I heard a loud clang. The demon then grabbed my sword.

"*Ah!*" I exclaimed in shock, and a spear pierced the fog to save me.

To be exact, the spear pierced the demon's neck.

"Go to a safe place," Jo Hye-Jin suggested.

"N-No. I can fight, too," I argued.

"…"

"I can fight," I said.

"…"

"Then join the troops," she ordered.

"Okay."

I saw Miss Jo Hye-Jin's back as she entered the fog again. I wasn't sure exactly where she was going, but I could vaguely see her attacking an angel with braided brown hair.

Boooooooooom!!

“Shiro! Let’s go!” I shouted.

“*Woof!*”

I knew how to fight because I had gone through extensive training, and I had already memorized the manual. My job was to buff the party members and to maximize my buffs, I had to go to the largest battlefield.

‘We don’t have visibility because of the fog.’

It was difficult to distinguish between enemies and allies. It was also impossible to find the exact location of a certain someone in such thick fog. Of course, I was sure it was the same for both the allied forces and the enemy.

‘Shiro can tell the difference through.’

Shiro's sense of smell was strong. It wasn't that effective in the middle of a large-scale battle, but in guerrilla warfare, Shiro's abilities would be really helpful.

Shiro had to have realized what he needed to do because he started moving. In the midst of running around, I needed to remember the terrain around me because it might come in handy later.

Just then, Shiro abruptly came to a halt.

“*Woof!*”

“Where are we? A-Are we here?” I asked.

“*Woof! Woof!*”

The masked man I had seen earlier was standing before me.

---

1. Alps' Point of View ☜

CHAPTER 719
ALPS (4)

'Shit.'

Battles are always unexpected.

'I knew they were going to invade, but… '

I[1] didn't think things would escalate to this extent in the blink of an eye.

'Is there no order to retreat?'

I knew why they were trying to protect this place.

"The Sunset Swordsman."

This was a battle to protect the corrupted deceased hero. I couldn't help but laugh at the absurdity of it. I couldn't say that this area was useless, but if we pulled back the troops, we could still maintain the front line. I couldn't find a reason to fight the enemy here, and I felt like we would experience a severe loss.

We couldn't lose a majority of high-ranking adventurers considered Named adventurers based on the continent's standards. To make matters worse, the Sunset Swordsman…

"There's no guarantee that he'll live."

He was already dead, and the rotting stench that penetrated the thick fog made it hard to breathe. How could I expect the hero to come back alive after seeing his hideous state? I always supported the commanders, but this time, I couldn't help but question their decision.

I thought perhaps they had lost their minds and questioned if the Acting Chairman of the Continental Protection Management Committee could even make reasonable choices since Chairman Lee Ki-Young wasn't around.

I continued waiting for them to tell us to retreat, but I didn't hear anything.

What I heard was their order to prepare for battle…

"Shit, I can't see anything because of the fog…"

"If they order us to fight, then we fight," the leader ordered.

"Are we moving towards the main base?"

"No, we won't be joining the main force," he replied.

"This is the perfect situation to get killed. As someone who's been fighting with the sword for a long time, I've always been telling myself I can die at any moment, but I'm against dying while protecting a corpse that can't even stand up, sir."

"We're just doing our jobs. If they give us an order, then we carry them out. That's our mission, and that's all we need to do," he said.

"Can you trust the current command center?"

"…"

"No matter how much I think about it, I don't think this is a reasonable decision. We have the gray warrior and the acting guild masters for the Black Swan Guild and the Blue Guild. The Named adventurers are here, and they shouldn't die in vain in a place like this. The war isn't over yet."

"I understand how you feel, but we have no choice but to trust *him*," he said.

"Who?"

"Father Lee Ki-Young," he answered.

"…"

"…"

"The gray warrior said he heard his voice, and the executives know it," he added.

"…"

"Is that true?"

"Yes, so let's trust him and fight. If we can't even trust him, then it means this continent is beyond salvation," he said.

"…"

"Party members prepare for battle. We're going in," I ordered.

If Mr. Rafael really wasn't lying…

'We have no choice but to fight.'

Especially if the order had come straight from Father Lee Ki-Young…

Of course, it could be a lie, and I would understand why the command center had decided to lie. They weren't trusting their decision. They were trusting Father Lee Ki-Young, saint of the continent, the son of Goddess Benigoa, and the guardian of light.

While I was fixing my helmet and shield, I felt a presence in front of me.

"Prepare for battle!"

"Arrows!"

"Don't shoot! Don't shoot! I'm an ally. An ally!"

"Stop! Damn it!"

A petite woman appeared from the fog, and I had seen her before.

"Alps?"

She was a new member of the Blue Guild. She was an adventurer famous for being one of the holy sword candidates. She had also made her relatively unknown job, which was Tamer, become popular.

She was with her dog as if she was proving to us that she was Alps.

I wasn't sure what was going on, but she was crying.

She was a part of the Blue Guild, but she was still a rookie. I thought perhaps she had run away from the battlefield after getting scared, but that wasn't it. She didn't look frightened. Rather, there was an unknown sense of determination on her face.

"You're…" the leader said.

"Please help," Alps requested.

"What?" he asked.

"You must come to the place where the guild master is. Please help," she asked.

"What are you…"

"I don't have time to tell you the details, but we have to go right now. Please help. I'm begging you," she said.

"Sir?" a member called out.

"…"

"Please," she begged.

"Sir?"

"We're changing our mission. Starting now, we're going to take the rookie of the Blue Guild to the guild master as fast as possible," the leader ordered.

"Is that… Shit, all right, let's go. Looks like we should go. And the reason?" a member asked.

"I received a message," Alps answered.

"That's more than enough," he said.

I didn't know what she had received and from whom, but our leader and the party

members nodded in agreement, so I had to agree as well.

However, I noticed a firm certainty in her eyes. I figured she wasn't lying at all.

“Let’s move.”

Traversing was difficult because of the fog, and I expected difficulties because we were in the middle of a chaotic battlefield, but…

“I’ll lead the way,” Alps offered.

I nodded as soon as I saw her dog running.

‘This must be expected from the Blue Guild.’

I was embarrassed for judging the girl for a moment. She didn’t seem hesitant as she ran while holding out her sword. I was kind of surprised about following a dog, but the rookie was guiding us toward where her guild master was located.

“I’ve only fought two times,” Alps confessed.

“Don’t worry. If we need to fight…”

“They’re coming from the front in thirty seconds,” she interrupted.

“Prepare for battle! Prepare for battle!” the leader ordered.

‘How the hell did the Blue Guild train the rookie guild member?’

She wasn’t experienced, but…

‘She’s strong.’

I wasn’t simply talking about her strength. She was mentally strong, and she was well aware of her role. Rookies wouldn’t act like her, and I would know because I was once a rookie as well. Rookies were either enthusiastic or nervous. They would be so focused on the battle that they wouldn't have the luxury to look around and assess the situation.

Some wouldn't even be able to do their part because they were too nervous, which

was the reason guilds preferred *experienced* rookies.

Rookies needed at least ten expeditions to get used to battlefields and assist the party, but the rookie before me was just…

'Is she really a rookie?'

Alps was calm, and she knew exactly what she could do. She was well aware of her limits as well. She had already adapted to our party. In addition to scouting, she was also observing the conditions of the other party members.

Whenever there was an opening, she'd immediately pull out her sword and charge in, but if she thought she would get in the way, she'd only provide support. The best part of this was…

"*Woof!*"

Her dog had granted us a buff similar to the buffs of those priests. I became faster and stronger.

"Watch out!" Alps shouted.

"T-Thanks," I said.

"You're welcome. Let's avoid the next one by going around toward the left," she suggested.

"Let's move with the rookie of the Blue Guild in the center," the leader ordered.

"Understood, sir."

We kept changing directions, so I didn't know where the party was headed, but one thing I was sure of was that we were getting to our destination. I never thought it would be possible to move like this on a fierce battlefield. I heard explosions everywhere, but strangely, nothing was happening to our party.

"Lift your shields!" the leader shouted.

"Shield! Shield! Shield"

A large light fell, and we immediately gathered before getting into a defensive position.

“Forward! Forward! We’re almost there! Forward! Let’s move!” Alps shouted.

“Got it.”

“There’s three in the front! Fight…” she said.

“Unit Two will take care of them. Unit One, keep moving forward!” the leader ordered.

“Yes, sir!”

“Stay alive, everyone!”

“I don’t know what’s going on, but take care of yourselves, guys!”

We even divided the party. After becoming a high-ranking adventurer, I never really felt out of breath, but I was reaching my limit physically.

“*Ahhhhhh!*”

“Forward! Forward! Move! Shit, move it! Don’t stop! Don’t stop and keep moving!”

“Leader! Did you ask for reinforcements?”

“The Red Mercenary Guild will open a path. Hey, Rookie,” the leader called out.

“*Woof!*”

“It’s been confirmed! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!“ she shouted.

When the Blue Guild’s rookie started running immediately, a faint light appeared in her hands. I didn’t know what that light was, but I knew that we had completed our mission.

The Red Mercenary Guild opened the path for us, and I finally saw the fallen hero.

“Hold up your shield! Hang in there! Hang in there no matter what!” the leader

yelled.

“Don’t back down, you bastards! Hang in there!”

“*Ahhhhhh!*”

“Defend your position! Defend your position!”

Even as strange lights continued falling on our shields, our attention was on what was behind us. The fog was starting to disappear, and I could finally see our current situation. The Blue Guild had been completely surrounded by the enemy with the sunset hero in the center.

“Are we all going to die?”

“Stop talking nonsense, man! Hang in there! We’ll overcome this! We will!”

‘Overcome this? I hope so.’

And that was when the rookie of the Blue Guild placed her hand on the sunset swordsman.

“W-Wake…” Alps mumbled.

“…”

“Wake up! Wake up! Hero of Altanus!” she shouted.

“Hang in there! Don’t worry about what’s happening behind us!” the leader ordered.

“Then I will give you a future!” she yelled.

“Just now, behind us…”

“Don’t worry about that, and just withstand the attacks! Make sure the enemy won't reach them! Mages, maintain your shield magic! Maintain it even if you vomit blood and pass out!”

‘Shit, are we really going to die?’

“Wake up! Hero of Altanus! Then I’ll give you the future!” she shouted.

I had no idea what kind of spell the rookie of the Blue Guild was casting, but I was certain about one thing. Everyone would die here if the sunset hero didn't wake up soon. The continent's rays of hope would disappear.

“Wake up! Damn it! Wake up! Sunset Swordsman! If you can hear me, then wake up! Hero of Altanus! Then I’ll… *Heuk*… give you the future! Wake up! If you can hear my voice, wake up! Hero of… *Heuk...* Altanuuus! If you can hear Altanus’ voice… Wake up, hero! T-Then I'll give you the future!” Alps yelled.

I couldn’t help but yell as well.

“Damn it… Shit!”

“Wake up! Hero of Altanus! Wake up and seize the future with your own hands! Wake up!”

The swordsman didn’t show any reaction. The rookie of the Blue Guild sounded heartbroken as she shouted incessantly while pouring a faint light into the unconscious Sunset Swordsman, but he remained unmoving.

“Wake up! Hero of Altanus! Then I’ll give you the future!” she repeated.

Just as I questioned if we were done for—

* * *

“Bingo.”

---

1. Point of view of a member of the allied forces ☜

CHAPTER 720
I BELIEVED (1)

"I'm sure he can get up," I[1] said.

'He has to get up.'

- Hang in there! Stand your ground!

The situation was at its worst, and mankind was losing hope.

- Get up! Hero of Altanus! Then I'll give you the future!

The allied forces had been completely surrounded, and the demons wearing the masks of angels were closing in, but mankind was resisting. They looked so honorable that I felt like crying. The timing couldn't be more perfect for the hero to make his return.

There was an opportunity, and there was enough preparation.

There were some things I was anxious about as well, but…

'Shit, forget about them. If he doesn't get up, it's over.'

I wanted to keep sending quests, but even that wasn't possible. If Alps weren't there, I wouldn't have been able to send quests to Kim Hyun-Sung. His mana was churning, which was enough proof that he was reacting to her voice. I was certain that he was going to wake up, but I wasn't so sure anymore.

However, I had to keep watching anxiously. I wanted to shout and cheer them on, but I was too nervous to even do that. In my perspective, this was my final dice.

'No, let's not make that kind of assumption. I'm sure he'll wake up.'

He'd wake up because Kasugano Yuno had told me that the future hadn't changed. She was still seeing that future, which meant Kim Hyun-Sung was going to get up at

any moment. He'd revive and stab me, but we'd live happily ever after in the end.

'Let's go, Hyun-Sung. Let's go! Please, please. You have to get up now.'

The troops were starting to converge into a massive formation.

The mages were losing their mana, and the priests were running out of holy power. The troops started falling into despair. This was the final resistance of those who knew that this place was going to be their grave. At this rate, it seemed that it would be the case.

While Alps was shouting desperately…

'That's… '

There wasn't a miraculous scene. It wasn't like a column of gray light fell from the sky, and there weren't any visual effects around Kim Hyun-Sung. It was quiet. The noisy battlefield suddenly became extremely quiet. The atmosphere became calm, and the fog around Kim Hyun-Sung started to disappear.

- *Ah… ah…*

Alps noticed something amiss.

- *Ah…*

She had to have seen Kim Hyun-Sung's body moving. His wings were trembling, and his fingers were moving. The dark hero was moving carefully as if he were a beast that had just emerged from hibernation. He looked like he wouldn't be able to move at all. I couldn't even believe that he was moving right now.

The sight was so unrealistic that I questioned if I was dreaming.

'Is he really alive?'

I believed in you, damn it. Everyone went quiet. The archers shooting arrows, the mages casting their spels, and the tanks raising their shields. Everyone turned to look behind them. They were all high-ranking adventurers, so they were aware that the situation had changed. They were looking at something that was moving when it wasn't supposed to move. The troops started rubbing their eyes in disbelief.

- He’s… He’s really alive.

- He’s actually alive… *Ha… haha*.

- G-Guild… Master?

- It’s the Sunset Swordsman. The Sunset Swordsman has been revived! I had faith, damn it!

‘Yeah, right.’

I was shocked because he had shouted a famous line despite the fact that he had fallen into despair a moment ago. However, I also started smiling because *I* believed in Kim Hyun-Sung. I knew he wasn’t going to die so easily.

- Guild Master…

Kim Hyun-Sung looked around while nodding lightly.

Then, his eyes landed on Alps.

His mask hadn't been destroyed yet, so Alps started trembling. Clearly, her joy lasted only for a brief moment. Kim Hyun-Sung possessed an immense amount of malice and corrupted magic power, which high-ranked adventurers normally avoided. Moreover, she was experiencing it up close, so it wasn't strange that she was trembling.

However, the energy started to disappear because Kim Hyun-Sung had no malicious thoughts toward Alps.

-…

Kim Hyun-Sung stood up and started looking around in shock.

- *Woo…*

Then, he looked up at the sky and sighed.

‘Has he not come back to his senses yet?’

No, it wasn't like he had lost all reason because Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't showing any malice toward the humans around him.

I was sure he could at least differentiate between allies and foes.

I wasn’t sure what was maintaining his mental health, but I nodded at his words.

- T-the future.

He was slurring, and he sounded hoarse. I didn't think he said that because he knew what it meant, but I could hear it loud and clear.

‘Yeah, Hyun-Sung. That’s right. The future.’

- The future.

‘Let’s go to the future. That’s where we’ll go. Say something, Alps.’

- Y-Yes, Guild Master. We can move forward.

- The Future… T-the future.

- Yes, *heuk…* The future.

- Future…

Kim Hyun-Sung spread his large wings, and I had to say something.

“Return, Dominions. Pull back your troops.”

I sent a message to Dominions fighting Jo Hye-Jin, as a retreat was the best course of action for them. However, it was nothing more than minimizing the damage.

As expected, Kim Hyun-Sung made a move. He spread his heavy wings and flew away. He swung his claws once, and the angels surrounding the humans were torn to pieces.

-…

He let loose a silent cry while tearing apart the bodies of those with white wings.

It was a glorious moment, and it had to be a sacred moment as well. However, the way Kim Hyun-Sung fought looked brutal. Obviously, the ones who were about to die probably saw him as a god because no matter how he looked or the kind of energy he was releasing, he was still a hero.

If one were to look at him subjectively, his appearance was definitely heroic.

- That's…

- I don't believe it. That's right, kill them all. *Haha*.

- The Sunset Swordsman.

- He was really revived. He actually… came back to life. *Hahahaha!* He's alive! He's alive, damn it!

- I-Is there still hope? Has Goddess Benigoa not abandoned us yet?

- It's exactly like Father Lee Ki-Young's prophecy. The son of god was speaking the truth.

The ones who were surprised by his sheer force and the ones who felt a strange sense of anxiety all cheered for Kim Hyun-Sung. They continued blessing the hero who had been revived. The concerned parties didn't react any differently.

Jo Hye-Jin looked around with uneasy eyes.

- Guild Master?

She had to have felt that he had been revived because she started moving in a hurry. She dragged her wounded self toward the middle of the battlefield, and she eventually saw Kim Hyun-Sung fighting fiercely.

She decisively made a beeline for him.

- Guild Master. *Heuk…* Guild master.

'That's right, Hye-Jin. You went through a lot.'

I wonder what Jo Hye-Jin was thinking as she looked at Kim Hyun-Sung. I was sure

she was happy because no matter his condition, the fact that he was alive and moving was enough for her to be happy.

- Hyung, I think I did it.

Rafael's expression was indescribable, but his emotions didn't seem to be negative emotions.

'Yeah, you played a big part.'

He was the puzzle piece we needed because he was the only one who possessed the holy power capable of healing Kim Hyun-Sung. The gray light was effective. If it hadn't been for Rafael, I was sure he wouldn't have been able to move.

I would have to give him a bonus or something later.

People like Park Yeon-Joo and Choi Young-Ki had the same reaction. They just stared blankly as the enemies disappeared in real-time. It didn't take long for the neverending battle to come to an end.

The angels pulled back their troops, and I finally saw light piercing the dispersing fog.

The light created by nature shone on the corrupted hero.

I saw the fallen hero standing alone in the ruins and muttering something incomprehensible. He looked sad, but he also looked holy to the point that I had no words to describe him. The sight of him made me tremble unknowingly.

"It's definitely a sight to see," Lee Ji-Hye commented.

"You're here," I greeted.

"I've always been here. I moved as soon as I heard your order. What? Did I come too quickly? Did you want to appreciate that sight more?" she asked.

"No," I answered.

"So… how should I report this?" she asked.

“Is there a need to write a separate report for this? Seraphim created this, not us. He’s the one who couldn’t get rid of the corrupted hero, so it’s not like we’re responsible for it. It’s actually a good opportunity for us because we can apply pressure to them,” I replied.

“Well… you’re right. Anyway, humans are interesting. Who knew they would cheer like that? They were probably thinking about what could have happened if Kim Hyun-Sung had attacked them… I’m glad he hadn’t completely lost his mind.

"If he had lost his mind, half of mankind's troops here would’ve died. Actually, it doesn’t matter if he hasn’t completely lost his mind because rage and malice are the only things capable of making him move,” she explained.

“It doesn't matter. I’m thankful as long as he’s able to move. We can take our time coming up with ways to turn him back. This is actually a great achievement. I think I’m starting to understand how things are going, how the puzzle pieces fell into place, and what I have to do,” I told her.

“Must be nice. You do look really happy, though,” she pointed out.

“Who, me?” I asked.

“Who else? Well, I would feel the same way. The stock that you thought had been delisted is going on a rocket trip to the moon, so I’m sure you’re really happy. It seemed like it was just yesterday when you were at a loss,” she said.

“…”

“Were you actually going to abandon the continent and cut ties with everything? You know, you’re really funny,” she asked.

“…”

“What do you think? Good thing I’m here, right? Would it have been different if I hadn't come here?” she questioned.

“Well… I wouldn’t know, but why talk about something that hasn’t happened? Let’s talk about something else. Did our Hye-Jin look okay?” I asked.

“Well, she seemed to be having a hard time. I felt like giving her a tight hug earlier.

Why don’t you try sending her a message? Wait, should I send it?” she asked.

“How can I do that when this situation is already suspicious?” I questioned.

“That’s true… Then… let’s take our time with this one. Anyway, let’s head back. People might get suspicious if we’re too late…” she suggested.

“…”

“…”

“By the way, noona…” I paused.

“What?”

“There’s something I’ve been meaning to ask…” I said.

“What is it?” she asked.

“How’s your body?” I asked.

Dominions started smiling.

“It’s great,” Dominions answered while looking like a complete scum.

---

1. Lee Ki-Young's Point of View ☜

CHAPTER 721
I BELIEVED (2)

‘I’d expect nothing less from Lee Ji-Hye.’

She had surprised me the most out of everyone. I still found it surreal, even though it had already happened. I knew she had some skills, but I didn't really need her back then. At least, that was what I thought when I exited the tutorial dungeon.

I had Mind's Eye, while Lee Ji-Hye had nothing, so it wasn't really strange that my opinion of her back then wasn't so high.

‘Well, I didn’t know it back then.’

It was boring, but she had been hiding her cards. Normally, people like us would hide a few things, but she was even worse. However, the biggest hint was the fact that she didn't really like gambling. The reason she had been hiding her cards had just recently become obvious to me.

'She's afraid that she might not be able to handle it.’

I was sure she thought it would be dangerous to reveal everything about herself with no real foundation. Now, she had countless ways to protect herself, but it was different back then. She was actually the opposite of me. I finally realized why she had contributed to saving mankind with the masked savior. No, it was more like there were two masked saviors from the start. She looked really scummy right now, but…

‘She did a lot, so isn’t she worthy of being called a masked hero?’

If Lee Ji-Hye weren’t here, I’d feel like my hands and feet had been cut off.

“What? Why are you looking at me like that? Have you finally realized how important I am?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“You've always been important to me, so why would you say something like that?

We're soulmates and partners. You're the only one I needed from the beginning. You know I love you, right?" I asked.

"I appreciate you saying sweet words to me, but it doesn't sound sincere. Your face looks really scummy. It's like you're thinking of ways to take stuff from me, but it's still not bad. It feels like I'm getting the treatment that I deserve…" she said.

"Of course," I said.

"This is why it's important to be competent," she remarked.

"By the way, noona. Are you sure it's okay? What about Dominions? Is he still alive?" I asked.

"He's still alive, but he's half-dead. *Ah*, yeah, he's still alive. Recently, he's become kind of obedient. It seems like he's starting to accept things, but even though he has become obedient, he does appear out of nowhere from time to time.

"However, I think he's just asking for attention, so I'm sure it won't take long for him to be completely obedient. He's surprisingly cute," she answered.

"…"

"Want to know the details?" she asked.

"Not… really…" I replied.

'What the hell is she doing?'

I knew she used Lonovera to do something in Dominions' dreams, but I felt frustrated at the thought that I had no idea what exactly she had done. Of course, it was none of my business, and the important part was that Lee Ji-Hye and Lonovera had entered his mind. If they were both pressuring him, I was already satisfied with that. Moreover, Dominions was apparently becoming obedient, so no other information was needed.

'It's a great ability.'

Before Lee Ji-Hye's arrival, there had been many times when I thought it was over. I knew Kim Hyun-Sung was going to regain consciousness, but withstanding that

pressure all alone was difficult. Lonovera knew that Kim Hyun-Sung was still in his body, and she exchanged messages with Kasugano Yuno in my place because she knew it was difficult for me to send messages.

More importantly, an ally had appeared in the middle of the enemy.

Thronus was supporting me, but he wasn't enough.

To be honest, I didn't need that incompetent bastard, and it might actually be better if he wasn't around. Anyway, our work had become a lot easier thanks to Ji-Hye noona. People were suspicious of me for various reasons, so her support gave me strength.

"So… we're continuing with the plan, right?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"Of course. Why do you ask?" I asked.

"I just want to return to my body as soon as possible. I did ask Yeon-Soo to take care of it, but I don't feel satisfied unless I do it myself. There are so many things I need to take care of… If I knew this was going to happen, I would've painted my nails a different color. My nails are in an outdated blue color. Yeah, it's the same color as Bonobono. I'm sure she's trying to screw me over. It's really frustrating," she complained.

"You're asleep anyway," I pointed out.

"You think it's easy to become me? I don't know about people like you who were born with nice and glistening skin, but the constant care and the little details are what made me who I am today. It's really annoying.

"You're starting to sound like those people who say ridiculous things like how they're not gaining any weight no matter how much they eat. Yes, I was busy, but I never neglected self-care. And that's exactly why it's really bothering me," she said.

"…"

"Once this is over, I'm going to take a few months…" she trailed off.

"…"

"…"

"The troops have recovered, so let's go back, noona. I think they're almost done recovering as well," I suggested.

"You're right. About Kim Hyun-Sung—"

"I'm just going to leave him be," I told her.

I thought our conversation was going to get longer, so when I changed the subject, I saw Lee Ji-Hye nodding. She seemed disappointed about the interruption, but she was aware that it was time to leave.

When I glanced to the side, I noticed troops not knowing what to do about Kim Hyun-Sung. The battle was over, but he was still looking up at the sky. The troops stared quietly at him, and since he wasn't showing any hostility toward them, they decided to watch the situation from afar.

I noticed Jo Hye-Jin thinking deeply about something. She eventually started talking to Rafael, and I felt like I knew what they were talking about without eavesdropping.

They were definitely discussing Kim Hyun-Sung's current condition, like if he was actually healthy and if he could go back to his original self. She seemed kind of nervous, but she seemed happier than nervous.

I was sure she was thinking that they would eventually find out a way to return him to his original self and that the important part was that he was alive.

Mankind now had a new homework to work on. The Sunset Swordsman had been revived, and their next quest was to return the Sunset Swordsman back to his original self. That was probably their priority, and I kind of had an idea as to how to achieve that, but…

"There might be other ways," I mumbled.

As of right now, I couldn't find a sure way to get to the ending where I had gotten stabbed by him, so I had to be open to possibilities.

"Are you kind of sad?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“A little, and I'm a bit worried as well. I’m curious as to how everyone is doing, but… I’m sure Hye-Jin will take care of it since I gave her that manual. She seemed to be doing fine,” I replied.

“Giving her too much pressure isn’t a good thing, but… she seemed really happy about the fact that her lover has come back to life. She still hasn't realized that it’s hopeless,” she commented.

“What do you mean it’s hopeless?” I asked.

“I’ve told you this many times before. There’s no chance of them getting together; they will never be a couple, so I hope you won't forget about our deal regarding Lee Ji-Hoo and Lee Ki-Yeon,” she reminded.

“We still don't know who will win,” I said.

“I’m looking forward to it,” she said.

“Me, too.”

I wanted to keep on watching, but I had to leave. I spread my wings, and I started floating awkwardly. It was the same for Lee Ji-Hye, I mean, Dominions. Her expression was changing; she had to be thinking that she needed to start focusing.

The first step was to make sure that the Four Angels wouldn't find out that Dominions had been replaced by Lee Ji-Hye, so it made sense why she had to focus. The moment Lee Ji-Hye’s scummy face disappeared, I thought she would feel like she was walking on thin ice, but she didn’t look nervous at all.

I couldn’t hold in my laughter because she looked like she was actually enjoying it.

“We’re arriving soon, Mr. Lee Ki-Young,”

“Thank you, Mr. Dominions,” I said.

I continued moving north and soon saw a large shrine. I didn’t know when it was built, but this was my first time seeing this type of architecture. I was supposed to be used to it by now, but I couldn't get used to it at all. It looked amazing, but that was all.

'This shrine is going to be destroyed anyway.'

This building would eventually vanish without a trace.

We walked in and saw a familiar figure. The incompetent Thronus was looking at me anxiously, and obviously, I didn't like the way he nodded because it was as if he was saying that he was relieved to see my safe return.

'That bastard.'

He was one of the angels who had voted against me going outside. As expected, he ran toward me in a hurry. Of course, he didn't ask how I was doing or anything because there was something more important than that. Dominions landed slowly on the shrine and blocked Thronus' path.

"Are you—"

"The corrupted sword has come back to life," Dominions said.

"What?" Thronus asked.

"I said the corrupted sword has come back to life. I think it's best if we have a meeting, Thronus," he suggested.

"Dominions, is that true—"

"I've told you twice already, Thronus. The corrupted sword has come back to life," he repeated.

'That's some great acting, Ji-Hye noona. Shit.'

"Where's Seraphim?" Dominions asked.

'That's right. Pressure him. It's his fault.'

"I'll go look for him," Thronus answered.

'This incompetent fool doesn't even know where Seraphim is. What can you even do?'

"Are you sure the Judgment of Sin was used on the corrupted sword?" Dominions

questioned.

“Y-Yes, I saw it with my own eyes,” Thronus stuttered.

“Are you sure you confirmed his death?” he asked.

“That’s…”

“Thronus!” Dominions called out.

“…”

“You should’ve checked,” Dominions added.

“…”

“You know very well what Seraphim is like… He’s always been overconfident in his abilities. You should’ve checked to see if the soul of the Corrupted Sword had left his body. If I didn't go out to scout today, we never would have known that he returned from the dead,” he complained.

“It’s my fault, Dominions,” Thronus said.

“I’m not trying to rebuke you. This is all Seraphim's fault. I knew his arrogance would cause problems one day,” Dominions added.

‘Again, it’s his fault, right?’

“Dominions, I—”

“I don’t want to hear your excuses or opinions. It already happened, and we need to find a way to fix this problem,” he interrupted.

‘You’re doing great, Ji-Hye noona. Shit, I’m proud of you. Destroy the pigeons, Lee Ji-Hye.’

“I said many times that the war with the humans won’t be easy and that it won’t work out as well as we think…” he continued.

“…”

“The situation has changed. We need to decide whether we’re going to continue this war or find a new way. It’s urgent,” I told him.

Thronus nodded slowly. I wasn’t sure if this guy had any idea what was going on, but when Dominions moved slightly, I saw Thronus trying to talk to me.

“So… did anything…”

“Let’s get going, Mr. Dominions,” I suggested.

“Okay, Mr. Lee Ki-Young,” he said.

I moved without making eye contact with him.

“Happen…” Thronus trailed off.

Light Ki-Young had once said, *“Don’t spare incompetent bastards even a glance.”*

CHAPTER 722
ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSION (1)

'Well, it's built pretty well.'

The exterior was impressive, but the interior was just indescribably mystical. The ceiling was in a style I had never seen before, and it was pretty high as well. Images of angles were carved on the large pillars, and paintings that seemed to depict their mythology were on the walls. They were interesting, but that was all.

Religious groups had always been like this.

The Order of Benigoa and the other orders weren't all that different. Breathtaking works of art would make any human being feel insignificant before the divine; their jaws would drop unknowingly, and they'd think about the existence of the gods once again.

The sunlight pouring in through the stained glass window, the magnificent hymns, the religious symbols looming above, and the overall *holiness* of the place… All these had been calculated. The angels had qualities similar to humans and qualities that were different, but they were all civilized.

'Isn't that a given?'

I was sure the demons were civilized as well, but these pigeons had come to *save* the continent, so it wasn't strange that they'd have something like this. I somewhat expected it and had confirmed it many times, but I still couldn't help but nod.

The angels were rational. They had a shitty philosophy, but they probably thought it was reasonable, so they had been working hard for it, believing their work to be for the greater good. They truly believed that what they were doing would help the continent and were making sacrifices for that.

They weren't working for fun or for pleasure. Of course, I couldn't guarantee that angels like that didn't exist, but they were definitely working with the so-called *greater good* in mind. For now, or at least on the outside, they appeared like that to

me.

I continued walking with Dominions, and I noticed others greeting us by nodding. I spread my wings to go toward the place designed to be accessed only by flying. The large door before me opened, and I saw a gold round table behind the door. There were others in there, including the Four Angels. The others didn't look as strong as the Four Angels, but they were all important figures.

Dominions sat down slowly. Thronus did the same, and I sat next to Dominions.

"I heard you called for a meeting, Dominions."

"That's right," Dominions answered.

'How come Lee Ji-Hye is so good at acting?'

If I weren't aware, I never would have imagined that Lee Ji-Hye was inside Dominions. It felt like she had copied his personality, his speech, and even his minor behaviors. It was so good that the others didn't notice anything strange.

"It's been a while since you called for a meeting."

"I don't think it's been that long. Recently, I…"

Even while exchanging pointless conversations, I felt someone looking at me.

It wasn't the incompetent Thronus.

'Cherubim.'

The long blue-haired angel was sitting quietly while wrapped in thick bandages. Hee-Ra noona had given him a few knuckle sandwiches to eat, but Hee-Ra noona herself wasn't in the best condition as well.

'They both got hurt pretty badly.'

The reason he was wrapped in bandages was that the beating he had received from Hee-Ra noona was so severe he couldn't recover completely with just his holy power alone. He wasn't showing any hostility toward me, but he seemed annoyed that I was here.

As expected, he said, “Why is that human here?”

“He’s a transcendent being, and he's no longer human. If you asked which side, I-I would say he’s closer to us. We've decided to work with him, so we shouldn’t exclude him. He had decided to work with us, so we should respect him,” Dominions replied.

“We’ll just have to wait and see if that’s actually the case. Even if he had confessed his sins and understood our goal, I still don’t think that he’s the same as us. Remember that once a traitor, always a traitor,” Cherubim said.

“He has no memories of what had happened before, and persecuting him simply based on assumption and suspicion is unlike us. Be dignified, Cherubim. I understand you’re not in a good mood because a human gave you a good beating, but…” he paused.

“…”

“He’s now one of us.” Dominions continued.

“You’re a good talker. If he’s really one of us, why are you controlling him, Dominions?” he asked.

“I’m protecting him, not controlling him, Cherubim,” he argued.

“I can’t agree with it,” he said.

‘Guys like you are normally the first ones to accept it, Bluey.’

“Refrain from making harsh remarks, Cherubim,” Thronus warned.

‘Don’t act like you’re trying to protect me, you incompetent pigeon.’

“That’s what I want to say to you, Thronus,” he said.

“Enough with the private conversation. Cherubim, I clearly stated that we didn’t gather here to listen to you vent. This is important,” Thronus reminded.

And that was when Seraphim entered through the large door…

“I’m curious about this important conversation you mentioned… Was there a need to

call for everyone?" he asked.

"…"

"…"

The platinum-haired angel sat down with his unique arrogant expression and started tapping the table with his finger. It was probably a habit of his, but I got annoyed because I had a similar habit of tapping my thighs. Overall, he looked relaxed, but it didn't take long for his face to change.

It happened exactly after Dominions' remark.

"The corrupted sword has come back to life."

"What?"

"It's like I said," Dominions said.

"I'm not a fan of those types of jokes, Dominions," Seraphim said.

"It's not a joke, Seraphim. I saw him getting up with my own eyes, and we've lost a lot of comrades this time," he told him.

"…"

"Are you sure using Judgment of Sin on him was the right move this time?" he questioned.

"…"

Seraphim fell silent, looking all confused and in denial. He didn't look anxious, but he definitely looked frustrated. I wasn't sure what he was thinking, but he was probably thinking about many things, from how Kim Hyun-Sung had come back to life to questioning his own abilities. Well, the latter wasn't really likely.

He wasn't the only one who fell silent. Setting aside the incompetent pigeon, Cherubim and the other angels seemed to have found the revelation to be quite serious.

"*Ahem*… How could this happen…"

"Is that true?"

"Yes. I don't know why or how, but the corrupted sword is alive," Dominions replied.

"That can't be…" Seraphim mumbled.

"It's true, Seraphim. I believe you can explain the situation the best…" he said.

"I-I'm sure I judged his sins, Dominions. He was executed by the countless Swords of Judgment, so there's no way he's alive," he stuttered.

"But he is," Dominions said.

"If he really is alive, then we just need to execute him again. There's no need to think so seriously about this," he said.

"That's what you think, Seraphim. How much holy power are you going to use, and how many comrades are you going to sacrifice this time? How much are you planning on sacrificing just to execute the corrupted sword once more?" he questioned.

'The pigeon bastard can't even say anything.'

"I'm not saying this to criticize you for your mistakes, but you're responsible for this, Seraphim. I'm not telling you to take responsibility for your mistake, but this was your mistake," he continued.

"I don't make mistakes, Dominions. I'm sure we're missing something. He had definitely stopped breathing. Another being who had sold his soul to a demon could have brought him back, or he could have borrowed a demon's power once more," Seraphim said.

"…"

"Of course, I truly did not expect this, but—"

"Is that all you can say about this?" Dominions interrupted.

"…"

"…"

"I was careless, and I apologize," Seraphim said.

"…"

"…"

"I hope my apology satisfies you, but… I'm sure you didn't call for this meeting just to hear my apology. What is it you want to say, Dominions?" he asked.

"I wanted to tell everyone that the situation has changed," he answered.

"What kind of situation?" he asked.

"It's just as I said. The situation has changed. We've lost too many comrades in the first battle, and the humans are more hostile towards us than we thought. We can keep fighting, but many humans will die. Obviously, I don't need to remind you that it will only increase the sacrifices we must make," he explained.

"So…"

"Being too oppressive isn't good for both sides. They will resent us, no, they already resent us," he continued.

"That's something we're willing to bear if it means saving this place," Seraphim commented.

"You must be aware of the fact that we're repeating the same mistake as before. This holy war won't bring us any benefits. The only thing we'll get is resentment and anger toward each other," Dominions explained.

"We were trying to control the human population in the first place, Dominions. We didn't expect them to understand us in the first place. We're not doing this so that they'll understand us. What's the point of—"

"I'm not asking for their understanding. I just think we need to change our strategy," he told them.

“This wasn’t your idea.” Seraphim pointed out.

“You’re right. It wasn’t mine,” Dominions said.

Dominions flinched a little, and he turned to me. I expected it, but Seraphim was more quick-witted than I thought. Seraphim probably thought that he had been affected by an outside force because it was such a random topic. He probably thought Dominions had heard it from me. I wasn’t sure whether the angels were going to accept it or not, but I had to say something because he was urging me to join the conversation.

“Speak, Lee Ki-Young.”

“If that’s what you wish… please excuse me for being rude,” I warned.

“…”

“First of all, I want to express my appreciation toward those working hard for the sake of the humans and the continent—to those who truly love and care about mankind—"

“Get to the point.” Seraphim interrupted.

“Of course, but I’d like to ask a simple question before getting to the point,” I said.

“…”

“Is this really an urgent matter?” I asked.

“What do you mean?” he asked.

“Does this matter really have to be addressed right now?” I questioned.

“…”

“I’m fully aware of how dangerous humans can be, as I was once a human being as well, but at this rate, the balance of the continent will be destroyed in ten—no, twenty years, don't you think so as well?” I asked.

“What are you trying to say?” Seraphim asked.

“What I’m trying to say is that we still have time. I’m asking if it’s really necessary to proceed with this task by sending half the human population to a heartbreaking death. They’re different from us. Their lives are limited. To put it bluntly, they will meet their end even if we don’t do anything. Why are we fighting them and sacrificing what we have?” I questioned.

“It’s to protect the continent,” he answered.

“I’m asking why we’re trying to look for answers through war, Seraphim,” I said.

“…”

“…”

“It's fun, sure, but I’m not sure it’s a profitable move, human. Everyone here knows that humans will eventually die, but they’re limitless for other reasons. They’re constantly creating more of themselves for the future generation and repeating the same mistakes,” Cherubim explained.

“You’re right, Cherubim,” I said.

“Are you trying to play games with me?”

“Of course not. I’m just trying to tell you that there’s a clue in your words,” I answered.

“What?”

“…”

“All we have to do is prevent them from creating their future generations,” I clarified.

“?”

“The population will then take care of itself,” I added.

“…”

“…”

“It'll consume a bit more holy power than usual, but what do you think?” I asked.

“…”

“Let’s sever their desires,” I suggested.

The room immediately became quiet.

“Let's change the system and resolve the issue at its roots,” I added.

Some of the upper echelons cast shocked gazes upon me…

"We'll contribute to the next evolution of humanity,” I said.

CHAPTER 723
ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSION (2)

"…"

Everyone became quiet, and a few looked at me as if I was crazy. It was understandable. I wasn't sure if they had never really come up with that idea, but…

'No, I'm sure they thought of it before.'

If their goal was to control the human population, I was sure they had considered reasonable methods like this, as it was a really peaceful method.

I was sure there would be problematic parts, but it was better than killing half of humanity. Of course, I had no idea how the future generations would accept this idea, but it wasn't really that important because first of all…

'It's all bullshit.'

And secondly…

'Even if it was carried out… '

The higher-ups would take care of the aftermath, not us. All we needed to do was throw in some bait and wait for the fish to bite it. Of course, it didn't matter whether they would take the bait or not, but things would be easier for me if they took the bite.

Obviously, I thought they would offer some kind of feedback, but I noticed they were staring at me with serious expressions.

'What? You guys seriously haven't thought of this idea before?'

I suddenly felt ashamed at the thought that these vicious villains hadn't come up with such an easy method, but I was sure it wasn't because of ethical reasons.

It was all because they were more morally conscientious than me. Of course, the biggest reason was that their way of thinking was different from humans, and another reason would be the fact that they were pretty close-minded.

They had already made their own conclusion about humans, and they never once questioned why humans were acting like humans. In their eyes, humans were probably like beautiful fireflies with ephemeral lives that had no choice but to leave their legacy and pass down their knowledge to the future generation for the sake of growth.

I was sure they thought humans were greedy as well, but if I had to think of another reason.

'It's probably a budget issue.'

I was convinced that they needed an unbelievable amount of holy power to do such a thing. If I were to compare it to the amount of holy power used to create this temple where we were, they probably needed three to four times more holy power to do what I had suggested. In other words, they couldn't carry it out simply because they wanted to do so.

I couldn't help but look around because they were quiet.

I didn't think Seraphim would say something because he seemed like he had a lot on his mind. The incompetent Thronus looked like he wanted to say something, but he seemed like he didn't want to start talking first. The elders would decide what to do after the Four Angels had made their comments, and it'd be dangerous for Dominions to start talking immediately, as Dominions would have to steer the conversation in my favor.

The pigeon who would talk first would probably be…

"This isn't something we should think about so lightly."

…the blue-haired pigeon.

"Humans have existed as human beings in countless dimensions and for an immeasurable amount of time. There's a reason why they were built and evolved that way. Taking away their greed is the same thing as changing the foundation of a building. The side effects are unknown, so it'll be dangerous," he continued.

“I’m not saying we should suddenly change them or wait and see what kind of changes it’ll bring the next day. It will happen *very* slowly. I’m not suggesting that we get rid of all their greed at once, but to eat away at it slowly, generation after generation.

"They’ll change without realizing that they’re changing, and they’ll search for new behavior patterns that will fit this change. That’s evolution, and they will become the new human race,” I explained.

“Bullshit.”

‘I agree that it’s bullshit.’

“It’s not bullshit,” I argued.

“I said that the side effects are unknown, you stupid human,” he said.

“We’re more than capable of handling that side effect. If they change in a different way from what we had intended, then we can open a new path for them to take,” I said.

“In the end, they might lose the desire to have children or leave a legacy,” he argued.

“We just have to decide on the timing,” I told him.

“This is no different from establishing a mating season. Humans aren’t beasts,” he said.

“I just said it to provide an example in extreme situations. Of course, it won’t be easy, and I definitely agree with your opinion that we shouldn’t be thinking lightly of this, Cherubim. However, nothing is easy,” I said.

“…”

“Traditional methods aren’t easy as well. There could be side effects beyond our imagination, and it won't be easy to make a decision either. But what can you do? Right now, we’re moving toward a unified task. Together, we'll take risks and decide on things,” I continued.

“Your suggestion is no different from changing the fundamentals,” Cherubim

commented.

“…”

“I know that as well, and I’m aware that the former option is a lot easier,” I said.

“…”

"Yes, it's a lot easier. We just need to kill their troops to take control of the continent. All of you possess power beyond imagination, so you can fulfill that task quite easily. In the end, you’ll raise a toast atop a tower built with blood and sacrifices,” I continued.

“What's up with the extreme examples?” he grumbled.

“It's not strange to think of the worst-case scenario because it can happen," I told him.

“…”

“I’ll say it once more. Cherubim is right; the method I suggested will be difficult. There are many things we need to worry about, and there will be unknown side effects. You might end up consuming more holy power than the temple’s budget, but at least you won’t raise a toast atop a tower built with blood and sacrifice,” I continued.

“…”

“However, I know that we will change as well, just like the new human race we’ll create together. We’ll change more than them and in a positive way,” I added.

I opened my hand slightly, and like a politician on an election campaign, I used my powerful and friendly voice to calm the room.

It didn't matter even if they said that it was all a bunch of bullshit. Actually, some of them were probably thinking that it wasn't worth considering. It didn't matter, as my bullshit would become powerful with Dominions' help.

My gaze landed on Thronus.

‘You’ll support me, right?’

'You’ve done a lot of wrong things to me. You have to support me if you want us to be friends again, okay?'

‘This is your last chance.’

Thronus was supposed to be applauding by now, but the incompetent bastard was quiet with a grim face. Actually, the way he was looking at me made it seem like he was going to object to my suggestion. Dominions was also looking at the others, and since no one was responding, he had to have decided that he needed to do something to get them to say something. Well, he had decided to ask for Thronus' help.

“Are there any other opinions? Thronus…” Dominions said.

“I…” Thronus paused.

‘Go on, man. Say it.’

“I’m not so sure,” he continued.

‘What?’

“Of course, I don’t think it’s right to raise a toast atop a tower built with sacrifices and blood, but… if the humans really do change that way, would they still be the same humans we truly loved? I think that suggestion will change many things, and those changes might be beyond our imagination,” he said.

‘This bastard.’

I wasn't expecting much from him anyway.

“Then are you suggesting that we simply continue like this?” I questioned.

“That’s not what I’m saying. I also agree with the suggestion that we should come up with a different method. We’ve lost so much, so we can’t experience the same situation again,” he replied.

‘This is bad.’

I needed supporters, or my suggestion would become nothing but bullshit. My suggestion would not have enough power if only Dominions were my supporter. Cherubim and Thronus weren't supporting me, while the elder pigeons were talking among themselves with serious looks without contributing anything to the discussion.

And that was when Seraphim finally spoke…

“Not bad.”

‘What?’

“It's not bad at all,” Seraphim said.

‘…’

“It’s not very convincing, but it’s not completely impossible. It's reasonable for the long term,” he continued.

“What are you talking about, Seraphim?” Cherubim asked.

“I'm saying that it's the same. Think about it, Cherubim. We have to control the humans anyway since maintaining the balance of the continent is our long-cherished desire. I want you to think about what's going to happen once we're done here. Their numbers will start increasing again, and you know very well that there’s no end to their greed," Seraphim explained.

"Humanity's desires are the reason humans have been developing and shining Seraphim,” Cherubim retorted.

“Yes, and their greed is exactly the reason they've been destroying everything around them, including themselves. Isn't that the reason we want to control them?" Seraphim asked.

“Yes, but this method is unacceptable! Seraphim! Stop talking nonsense! We shouldn’t try to change them. Yes, we're going to control and manage them, but we're not going to change their nature!” Cherubim shouted.

“Wanting to control and manage them has been a dangerous idea to begin with, Cherubim. We’ll have to make another sad decision again. We’ll have to kill them if

we want to make sure that we all have them under control.

"That human is right. Perhaps the reason behind our existence is to urge humanity into evolving into a brand new human race," Seraphim replied.

"You're crazy, Seraphim. And Dominions! Have you fallen for that human's sweet words? I'm sure you still remember what happened before, you fools! He has the tongue of a snake, and he's more vicious and treacherous than a demon! I hope you're not thinking that scum had made that ridiculous suggestion because he truly loves humanity," Cherubim retorted.

"Refrain from speaking harsh words, Cherubim," Thronus warned.

"Why are you taking his side when you're against his ridiculous suggestion, Thronus?!" Cherubim shouted.

"I haven't fallen for the human's sweet words, Cherubim," Seraphim said.

"Shut up, Seraphim! You've always been like this!" Cherubim yelled.

"What?"

"You think I don't know about your disgusting desires—"

"Shut up," Seraphim interrupted Cherubim.

"You're mistaken if you think I don't know," Cherubim replied.

"Shut up, Cherubim!" Seraphim shouted.

'Shit. It's a mess.'

"Please refrain from talking about things unrelated to the meeting," Dominions said.

"How can you say that after hearing the conversation just now?" Cherubim questioned.

"You're extremely worked up, Cherubim. This is unlike you," Dominions said.

"How can I stay calm in a situation like this? You're the one who's not acting like

yourself, Dominions. You're always making reasonable decisions, so why…" Cherubim trailed off.

'It's such a mess. The elder pigeons are starting to participate as well.'

"Nothing has been decided yet. I'm just suggesting that we consider various directions," Seraphim said.

"How can you just sit by and watch? Changing the nature of humans? Wouldn't they become something else rather than humans if we were to do that?" he asked.

"Humans are ever-changing, " I chimed in, "I mentioned evolving them into the new human race, and it's going to be difficult, yes, but if it's possible, then it may truly be a great achievement. It's a solution that may resolve the issues even in the other dimensions," I chimed in.

"It's not something to think so seriously about, and it's not even worth considering it. It's simply—"

"That's why we're suggesting that we think seriously about it!"

I noticed people raising their voices here and there. I couldn't help but be satisfied by the fact that they were starting to take sides. Honestly, I didn't think it would be this easy.

'Shit. It's amazing.'

I was suddenly reminded of the famous saying that families shouldn't talk about politics with each other. I even heard some say that there wasn't anything scarier in this world than ideology.

'Dumb pigeons.'

It didn't take long for me to place down the first puzzle piece, and these dumb bastards instantly took the bait.

CHAPTER 724
ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSION (3)

'It's kind of surprising.'

I started this thinking I would have Thronus and Dominions' support, but Thronus' sudden betrayal made me feel dumbfounded. However, the platinum-haired pigeon had decided to save me, which was unexpected. If he hadn't shown me his support, this plan would have gone down the drain. If I had to give an example, this was no different from a business. Our budget was limited, and the answer was already there.

The business wasn't profitable, so it didn't make sense to even think of whether it was profitable or not. Of course, a meeting was still necessary for everyone to come to a conclusion about whether the business was profitable or not.

The issue was that these pigeons didn't consider this as a business venture, and Seraphim's participation transformed the meeting into an ideological war. He acted like those politicians who believed that communism was the most perfect ideology and rolled the dice on the side falling into the abyss.

Actually, the idea wasn't completely nonsense, so one couldn't say that our side was falling into the abyss.

'Except it requires a huge amount of budget… '

We could make up for the things that are lacking; we had a lot of time, so we might actually be able to create a new human race. However, it was still impossible to deduce when we would start making a profit, even without the obstacles of the lack of budget and the time necessary to implement the business.

"At least they took the bait," Lee Ji-Hye said.

"What's that on your face? It's not even your body, so why bother putting that stuff on?" I questioned.

"*Ah*, it's a habit. I don't think it was really necessary, seeing that they have really good

skin, but I still wanted to do it. Doing this will make me feel like I'm resting. I honestly wanted to do various things like changing his hairstyle, but… it'd be weird if I suddenly changed things about him," she answered.

"You're right… I think they'll look at you strangely," I said.

"I don't think so. It's not like they're interested anyway. They're too busy taking sides… so they won't care about me changing his hairstyle," she argued.

"I don't know about the other pigeons, but Cherubim might notice," I said.

"*Ah*, you're right. He was surprisingly observant. I was actually thankful that he started making a fuss like that. They say it takes two to tango, so seeing him really worked up like that helped others take the bait. If he hadn't said anything, I'm sure it wouldn't have gotten this intense… Did you hear what happened yesterday?" she asked.

"What happened?" I asked.

"The elders supposedly fought. I managed to peek and noticed that it was more brutal than expected. They're more serious about this than I thought. I think the title—Trailblazer of the Birth of the New Human Race—has moved their hearts.

"More importantly, Seraphim and his clique were on our side, which made all this possible. Who knew that crazy pigeon would become an ally?" she answered.

"You're right," I said.

"About Thronus…"

"I haven't met him yet… I need to make time for him. I honestly don't have high expectations. Two versus two is more balanced, and it needs to be more intense to make the fight worth watching," I told her.

"You're right about that. Watching the things that's been happening here lately has been really fun. It's more fun than watching the news on Earth. I like how they nitpick, prolonging the conversation, and how they're arguing while taking sides… If possible, I want to do something that will give me a sense of accomplishment, but these useless arguments are fun as well," Lee Ji-Hye said.

“This is only the beginning. Are you ready to go?” I asked.

“Are *you* ready to go, oppa?” she asked.

“Of course.”

“Then let’s get ready. It’s almost time for our large shareholder to enter. I wonder why I never met you on Earth. We really would have achieved something great together,” she commented.

“I agree, noona,” I said.

I noticed Lee Ji-Hye getting up and getting ready. I also started reviewing the documents while making tea. Dominions decided to prepare the snacks. I thought it would be good to prepare wine, but I decided to open it once everything was set. The lighting wasn’t bad, and the atmosphere was great.

I glanced over at Ji-Hye noona and was convinced that she was an expert in this field.

‘Man, she really is a natural when it comes to being a fraudster.’

“Your expression changed. You’re a natural when it comes to being a fraudster. You were born to be a fraudster,” she said.

“…”

“And the elders?” I asked.

“They’re coming. Didn’t you hear what I said earlier? Everything is ready,” she repeated.

“Okay.”

“No more private conversations from now on. You should stay on your toes as well,” she suggested.

“Let’s do this.”

“We’ll just have to die if we fail,” she commented. The face of a fraudster I saw earlier was no longer there as she sat at the round table. After transforming into Dominions,

she started reviewing the documents before her.

Soon, the door opened, and I didn't need to turn my head to see the visitor. Still, I had to stand up and welcome them. I greeted them with a smile and saw Seraphim nodding at me.

"You're here," I said.

"I am. You're here early, Dominions," Seraphim greeted.

"I came here because I had some things I needed to review, and this isn't something that we should execute so easily," Dominions said.

"You're right. Cherubim and Thronus seem like they don't really understand…" Seraphim said.

"I didn't think they'd understand right from the start. Everyone knows that Cherubim isn't the type to accept new ideas. I was kind of surprised about Thronus, but now that I think about it. It's not actually strange. He gets easily scared," Dominions explained.

"You're right, Dominions. Thronus does get easily scared," Seraphim replied.

"I think if we can show results, Thronus will join us. It's going to be difficult to convince Cherubim, but at least we'll be able to argue with his outdated theories," Seraphim continued.

"…"

"There's no need to criticize them. They'll understand us eventually, which is why this matter is important," Dominions added.

"I know."

Seraphim glanced over at me.

"But I am doubtful about a few things. *Ah*, I'm on the same side as you, Dominions. Creating a new human race and continent has been on my mind for quite some time now," Seraphim confessed.

'Hey, Mr. Seraphim. That's my plan and my achievement, so you can't just make it your own like that.'

Actually, it didn't really matter.

"The plan was impressive as well," Seraphim said.

"Thank you."

"But it is risky. Don't you agree?" he asked.

'I wasn't expecting that.'

But it was understandable that he'd think that way…

'He's not a complete idiot who would follow blindly.'

I was sure he made his decisions after reviewing the plan carefully. The plan was made after discussing it with Lee Ji-Hye, but it wasn't exactly risk-free. We also couldn't lie to them that it was risk-free, as it was impossible to convince the shareholders that this business was completely safe. It was impossible even for the masked hero duo.

'We tried to hide it as much as possible, but he caught on.'

"It's especially risky considering the current situation. I believe everyone has thought about what kind of result it'll bring if this fails. Dominions, do you—"

"I also agree with you, Seraphim. But no matter what it is, there will always be risks. We have already experienced failure once. Of course, the situation was unavoidable, but we can't say we were not completely at fault," Dominions interrupted.

"…"

"You must think about it, Seraphim. What's left of anger and hatred? Even if we continue this war, what will it bring us in the end? Humans are only capable of seeing things that are happening before their eyes. The future they're thinking about is different from ours. They'll resist, and they won't adapt to their circumstances. If we take strong measures, they'll come up with even stronger measures. Sacrificing oneself for a far unseeable future isn't an easy task, after all," Dominions explained.

"…"

"Thronus and Cherubim are probably thinking that they have a choice, but they're wrong. It's not an issue that can be dismissed by simply having different opinions," Dominions added.

"…"

"It's a question of right and wrong, not a matter of ideology," Dominions said.

"Dominions is right. This is a question of right and wrong. That's why testing out this plan is required, Seraphim," I chimed in.

'He's thinking a lot harder than I thought.'

It was a situation where I thought perhaps the budget we had decided on was just too high to accept, but we needed that much budget for it to be a proper investment. We just wrote the amount of holy power we needed in order to create a proper result, but we still needed to convince the elder pigeons.

Seraphim had decided to refrain from going all-in, which meant…

'He's questioning it.'

He wasn't questioning me. After all, he had already judged me for my sins. He was questioning whether this would succeed or not as well as other questions along the lines of that.

'We've already done this before, so I'm confident that this will succeed.' I was sure Seraphim thought that way. He was definitely convinced that he could take advantage of the failure in his past life to succeed in his current life.

I was sure he thought it would be better to walk down the path he was already familiar with rather than walk down an unknown path, and I thought the same. If I were to make an investment, it was common sense to invest in what I was familiar with.

If I had to give an example…

'It's like someone working in the restaurant industry for his entire life is suddenly going

into the fashion industry after their restaurant went bankrupt.'

Seraphim was nervous. He just wasn't showing it.

I glanced at Dominions, and he nodded. Dominions signaled at me with his eyes, and I started talking, "Of course, I understand what you're worried about, Seraphim."

"I'm not worried. It's just…" Seraphim trailed off.

"I'm sure you think that the plan is lacking, and I knew it wouldn't be enough to satisfy you. Even I think the plan is pretty risky, and it also has many issues that have to be smoothed out over time. There are many issues with the plan, so it's far from perfect," I continued.

"Mr. Lee Ki-Young is right. It's not perfect," Dominions commented.

"The right thing to do is take our time, and that's how we can decrease the budget requirements over time. We can't make any drastic deduction to the budget, as this is a long-term plan. We must show results before Cherubim does something. The elders will be able to make a reasonable decision so long as we have results," I suggested.

"Is that why you need holy power?" he asked.

"I've said it before, haven't I, Seraphim? I acknowledge both your anxiety and the flaws of my plan. I won't tell you to invest in something risky. Dominions and I are enough; we can create the foundation by ourselves," I answered.

'That's right. We're going to do it without you.'

"What?"

"I hope you won't take offense, Seraphim. We made this decision based on your situation because we might go over the budget. We want to create a test server for the plan, but we can't predict what kind of variables will arise during the test, so it's risky.

"Once we've laid out the foundation, you can join us by then once you're convinced that the plan is sufficiently within your risk tolerance," Dominions suggested.

‘But I'm sure you know that if we go public with our subsidiary, the junior shareholders will receive less money than the large shareholders, right?’

“Dominions is right, Seraphim. Dominions possess more holy power than I thought, so the two of us should be enough. You don’t have to worry,” I commented.

‘Our budget is huge, so we don't need your help. This plan will obviously succeed, so I don’t want to split it between three people. Dominions and I were the ones who started this; you just joined in the middle of it. You can catch the crumbs that'll fall on you later.’

Seraphim probably thought that we were telling him along the lines of that.

“Mr. Lee Ki-Young is right. We should’ve told you earlier, but…” Dominions paused.

‘I like how we’re going back and forth, noona. We’ll take the title of Father and Mother of the New Human Race, platinum-haired pigeon. You’ll be nothing more than an assistant.’

Our words probably sounded like that to him.

CHAPTER 725
EXPERIMENT (1)

I didn't expect them to take the bait so easily. After all, convincing someone to do something wasn't that easy. However, the bait I had made was quite rational and reasonable in their eyes, so there was a high chance that they would bite it.

It was the same as people saying that they wouldn't fall for scams after seeing people getting scammed, but if one were to look around, there were many such rational victims everywhere.

The victims weren't dumb, and that certainly wasn't the reason they got scammed. In fact, even scammers making a living out of backstabbing people would get scammed as well.

Not to mention highly educated people, but even veterans with extensive social experience could get backstabbed as well. Of course, there were people like our lovely regressors, who were unconsciously making it easier for others to stab them in the back.

However, people like them were quite rare. The majority would act cautiously, and in fact, even beasts would be wary whenever they had to offer up something that belonged to them.

Seraphim was the same.

He knew our plan was feasible because of all the work we had put into it so far, but he felt like he couldn't offer up something that belonged to him so easily. However, he also understood the fact that we need something, so…

'We just have to ask him for an appropriate amount.'

An amount that wouldn't be burdensome to him—small enough that it wouldn't hurt him to offer it to us. Obviously, we would gradually increase our demand as time went on, but right now, our demand shouldn't be too burdensome for Seraphim.

It should be an amount he was willing to lose. Objectively, it wasn't a small amount, but I believe Seraphim had enough holy power to invest in our venture, as he had been saving up for a long time after all.

I was sure he was thinking of whether he should do it or not and was considering if he should just treat the extra holy power as extra money. Inevitably, he'd start doubting and think that we were trying to exclude him from the plan.

He might get worried that we might abandon him in the middle of it because he didn't get on the *parents of the new human race* wagon in time. I was sure it was Seraphim's biggest dilemma so far, as Seraphim was a strong, independent pigeon.

I wouldn't say he was exactly like Lee Ji-Hye and me, but we had many things in common. Of course, I would say he was the most similar to me because he had the same habit as me, but If I were in his position…

'I'd read the plan one more time.'

I didn't enjoy rolling the dice, but I wasn't dumb enough to not roll it when necessary.

However, I would still make sure if the dice were even worth rolling or not.

As expected, Seraphim quietly looked over the plan again thoroughly. Of course, he wouldn't find any issues because he already knew that this venture was risky. Anyway, if he became suspicious once more, he would…

'He'll ask questions.'

"How does the test server work?" Seraphim asked.

"It's exactly as you see it. You can think of it as a small, independent world," I answered.

I needed to show him what we had.

Dominions snapped his fingers, and a small map appeared before us. It was small, and it looked like a miniature version of the continent. One would feel like they were staring at a tiny world from up above, as the map featured tiny houses and natural landscapes.

Did we make it? Of course, we made it ourselves. We had to show results to this doubtful pigeon. As expected, Seraphim looked really shocked. I was sure he didn't expect that the plan had already gotten this far.

"Actually, it's been a while since we created an environment for the programs to live in; we made sure that it's a smaller version of the continent's major cities. The necessary environment and landscapes are present as well, so there shouldn't be huge bugs.

"Of course, there will be minor errors, but we can fix those errors immediately," I explained.

"Interesting. Are you saying that there will be smaller versions of humans living on this tiny continent?" he asked.

"To be exact, they're programs pretending to be humans. We call them Dummies, but… you got it right. That's the idea," I replied.

"How are you planning on bestowing personalities upon them? I don't think these dummies you've created will be like actual human beings. If they're just pretending, then it's going to be all meaningless," he asked.

"We have accumulated enough data," I told him.

"Can you tell me where the data is from?" he asked.

"I can't tell you right now," I answered.

"Dominions, do you—"

"Yes, I know," Dominions interrupted.

We actually had the data, and I was planning on continuing this meaningless experiment because that'd make him throw the dice.

"Are you saying I must join for you to reveal it to me?" Seraphim questioned.

"I don't think you're going to find it interesting. There's actually no reason for me to hide it, but… I *do* have data on most of the humans on the continent. I can't guarantee that they'll behave like the creatures actually living on the continent, but

they'll behave pretty similar to them," I answered.

"*Hm…*"

"Five million people," I added.

"What?"

"There are going to be a total of five million programs with unique behaviors. I can say with confidence that their actions won't be copied and pasted. It'll be five million unique characteristics and habits," I explained.

"They are dummies, but how is that—"

"It *might* be possible, and the holy power written in the budget should be enough for us to do it," I interrupted.

"An experiment of this scale will be possible if the proposed budget is met, Seraphim. If it weren't for Mr. Lee Ki-Young, we wouldn't have even attempted to do something like this. This is no different from building an actual world. Of course, this is more of a copy, but that's the reason why this is meaningful," Dominions chimed in.

"…"

'Is this not convincing enough?'

Everything was real, and there wasn't a single lie in our words. Of course, I had no plans on changing the plan in the middle of it either. This experiment would continue, and creating the new human race would continue as planned, but it was only if he decided to invest in it.

"I'll join you," Seraphim said as he nodded slowly.

"…"

"…"

"You really don't have to, Seraphim," I said.

"No, I want to join you. I'll double the original budget," he offered.

“Really?” I asked.

“Yes.”

‘Wow, Mr. Seraphim is a big spender. Seriously.’

“He said it's fine, Seraphim,” Dominions said.

“No, Dominions. Wouldn’t it be better to do good things together? I’ll deliver it to you right now,” he said.

‘He’s even enthusiastic about it. I appreciate it, sir.’

“I said you didn’t need to…” Dominions mumbled.

“I think it’s best if we write a contract as well,” he suggested.

When Dominions mumbled that he didn’t need to join, Seraphim felt anxious. I knew why he was anxious. He wanted to proceed with this as soon as possible.

“When can I see the results?” Seraphim asked.

“Five days should be enough,” I answered.

“That’s fast,” he commented.

“It’s because we don’t have a lot of time. Of course, this should be kept a secret from Thronus and Cherubim. I’m sure they’re going to try to keep us in check. I would like for you to keep them in check as well, Seraphim. Of course, you should support the elders as well,” I requested.

“Of course. I’m well aware of what I need to do. Are you sure I can see the results that quickly?” he questioned.

“Yes, I promise,” I answered.

“Great. I’ll be on my way then. Like you said, I must convince others, including the elders, so… it looks like I’ll be busy for the first time in a while,” he said.

“I’ll leave it to you, Seraphim,” I said.

'Thanks, man.'

"Okay."

'I really appreciate it, man.'

I was sure the holy power he had just decided to invest was chump change to him, but the beginning was half of the whole. It was amusing how he left while whistling.

Moments later, Dominions—I mean, Lee Ji-Hye, started talking.

"Double the budget… We didn't get as much as I thought. Maybe we should've increased the budget."

"No, this is perfect, noona. If we increased it a little more, I'm sure it would've been harder to convince him, and he could have other plans as well…" I said.

"*Ah*, the data?" she asked.

"That's right."

"It was a good way to convince him. Even if the plan fails… he'll still think that it's profitable because we at least have the data with us. I would have thought the same if I were in his shoes. It's highly likely that things will work out, and the experiment is possible so long as we create five million dummies with unique personalities and habits.

"He won't be able to use it, of course. In addition, Max and you are the only ones who can access the Benigoa Net administration system and export the data," Lee Ji-Hye explained.

"That's true, " I said.

"Can you give me administration rights, too?" she requested.

"I can't even if I want to. I need to have the Museum Administration title. Anyway, this is fun. Let's start the experiment right away. Our investor wants to see results, so we need to work hard on the experiment, noona," I suggested.

"We did it, though." She pointed out.

“I’m talking about another experiment,” I said.

Lee Ji-Hye tapped the air, and there was a flash of light. When the light disappeared, I saw humans the size of a nail on the small map. They were dummies, but they were created based on the saved data we had collected using Benigoa Net, so they looked pretty realistic. They were copies of either the users on Benigoa Net or the people who had been living on the continent. It felt like I was playing a game.

I spread my fingers as if I were zooming in on a smartphone, and the scenery zoomed in. I saw the Blue Guild, and it seemed that it was meal time as I saw everyone sitting in front of a table.

I didn’t know what they were talking about, but the way they were chattering away made it look like they were having fun.

Park Deok-Gu, Ahn Ki-Mo, and Kim Ye-Ri—the ParkKiRi siblings looked like they were having the time of their lives because they were clapping and laughing.

As usual, Jung Ha-Yan was sitting next to me. Sun Hee-Young and Elena were talking to each other while Alps hugged her dog. Lee Chang-Ryeol, Yoo Ah-Young, and Han Sora were there as well.

I saw Jo Hye-Jin, too. The way she looked uncomfortable while sitting upright made it seem like we had actually moved her from the continent and onto this place. Kim Hyun-Sung was there as well, and he was going along with the flow.

‘Is this an error?’

I thought he would look a little awkward, so it was a surprise to see him getting along with everyone. It seemed that we had adjusted his social skills and added a few more points to it than the real Kim Hyun-Sung.

“Do you want to return to the Blue Guild?” Lee Ji Hye asked.

“Why? Did it seem like I was feeling sentimental?” I asked.

“A little bit. I was also looking at my guild, as it's like my home. But I guess it's understandable since we’ve completely settled down,” she replied.

“I feel the same, noona. I don’t miss them terribly, but I do think of them from time to

time," I said.

"But this is really hard. I know we're thinking about creating a new human race, but even the experiment is difficult. I'm not even sure if we'll get results," she said.

"This is enough for now. We'll just reveal that we've created the dummies in the next meeting so that we can get more holy power. We can just make adjustments over time," I suggested.

Dummy Lee Ki-Young was riding his griffon and was heading toward the Red Mercenary Guild.

Lee Ji-Hye next to me tapped on the map. She was probably testing to see if our personality had changed. We had done the same thing last time, but the result wasn't exactly great. Dummy Lee Ki-Young entered the Red Mercenary Guild and started knocking on the door to the exit, seemingly desperate to leave the guild. However, Dummy Cha Hee-Ra grabbed his head and dragged him away.

'New human race, my ass!'

We were going to rug pull this coin, anyway.

"It's a horrible sight. I think you're going to die. *Ah*, but it's better than before. The detailed adjustment must've been effective," Lee Ji-Hye remarked.

CHAPTER 726
EXPERIMENT (2)

'I don't think it's that effective.'

"It's just a piece of data, but it's pretty interesting. Removing one's desires isn't an easy task, and the side effects mean that the outcome will still be the same, even with detailed adjustments. There isn't much we can do about this," Lee Ji-Hye said.

"*Hm…*"

"It can be suppressed for about three months; certain people are in heat, *ah*, I shouldn't say that. It's not like humans are beasts. How should I describe it to make it sound more classy? Should we name it *Love Day?*" she asked.

"Let's take our time thinking of a suitable word. Anyway, that's not really important right now," I answered.

"The problem is that when this week comes, people will start becoming aggressive. It's interesting how there is a variety of people here with their own personalities. There are people who aren't as affected when Love Day comes because of their low sex drive.

"On the other hand, there are people who explode like a bomb and even become aggressive. You can say that you're the former and Dummy Cha Hee-Ra is the latter," she said.

Even if Cha Hee-Ra weren't aggressive… she was the type to behave strangely on a daily basis. I could already deduce just how impactful this side effect would be just by staring at Jung Ha-Yan and the gang visiting Dummy Lee Ki-Young's room many times a day.

"Despite that, the system is operating pretty great. The problem is that either both sides are aggressive, or they've completely lost all desire. Either way, the numbers are right," Lee Ji-Hye said.

“You’re pretty serious about this, noona,” I commented.

“When will I get the chance to do this again? Experiments like this are fun. This feels like a game, doesn’t it? It’s also something we need to do, anyway… I’m sure we’ll get brownie points just by doing experiments like this. Of course, there are things we can’t announce, but… we can’t show those, anyway.

"It’s not different from us telling them that our work is going to fail,” she said.

“Of course, we need to hide those things because we can’t show only the good things. We can just show a few side effects, you know, the minor ones. Don’t show things like locking people up… Only show side effects that Seraphim will understand and ones we can handle ourselves. Let’s pick those and show them to him,” I suggested.

“I think it’s a good idea to announce how personalities are divided. I think the pigeons will like it, and we might find answers we couldn’t find. Honestly, we can’t do everything with this one thing, but… *Ah!* Dummy Kim Hyun-Sung and Dummy Jo Hye-Jin's relationship still hasn't progressed.

"I thought they would at least go on a date… I even helped them. It’s interesting that they won’t behave the way I want despite being a bunch of programs,” she added.

“Noona, this isn’t reality. Why are you so hung up on it? I was actually thinking that there was some kind of error with Dummy Kim Hyun-Sung. His social skills are higher than expected, and he has become kind of different. Wait, why are you interfering?” I asked.

“I know this isn’t real, so I played some tricks. Also, they are pieces of data, but they’re more real than you think. You want me to tell you the thing that gave me goosebumps?” she asked.

“What is it?”

“Dummy Lee Ki-Young has realized that there’s something strange about this situation. It might even be aware of the fact that he’s actually a dummy,” she replied.

“What?”

“Shit, I just got goosebumps.”

“You have no idea how creeped out I was. He even left a letter,” she revealed.

“What did it say?” I asked.

Lee Ji-Hye tapped the air, and I saw the letter that Dummy Lee Ki-Young had written.

- I don’t know what it is you all want, but I think I can help.

‘Ah, shit. I’m getting goosebumps.’

“Delete his data, noona,” I instructed.

- Oh, transcendent one. I know you’re watching me.

“Noona, I’m really getting goosebumps. What’s with this bastard?” I questioned.

“I already got rid of that one. So that’s… the 345th one. You still haven’t read the report I sent you?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“Not yet…” I replied.

“I’m not sure exactly which one it was. Maybe it was the 382nd one, but I think that one caught on as well. I needed data when we desperately needed to make progress… Honestly, even I think that there were a lot of errors. I couldn’t make any detailed adjustments.

"I’m sure the sudden change in the environment caused confusion amongst the dummies. Of course, the 382nd one caught on as well. 382nd Dummy Lee Ki-Young sent messages like this, but I just ignored them,” she explained.

“So?”

“You know what happened?” she asked.

“What happened?” I questioned.

“He started a rebellion. He instigated and caused chaos, saying that they must resist the system. I was really surprised. The temple turned into a sea of fire in one day, and 382nd Dummy Lee Ki-Young even started making threats just to lure me into responding. I was so shocked that I immediately reset all data,” she replied.

“That’s really creepy,” I commented.

“I got goosebumps, too. I wondered if we were in the same situation and got worried. Anyway, get rid of that report immediately once you're done reading it. It contains data we can’t use in the presentation, anyway, so isn’t it better if we don’t have it?” she suggested.

“I was going to throw it away. Anything else? *Ah*, what about these guys?” I asked.

“The dummies?” she asked.

“No, the actual people,” I answered.

“I think they’re doing things according to the manual. They seemed well-prepared for the war, and they were doing better than before. Kim Hyun-Sung was still the same, but he seemed to be trying various things. The pigeons haven’t sent their troops yet, so they have enough time to prepare,” she replied.

To be exact, it was more like we were stopping them from sending troops. Basically, the war had entered a state of lull, and I was sure the humans were confused as well. They were probably surprised because the pigeons had suddenly disappeared.

It wouldn’t be strange at all if they suddenly decided to dispatch their troops to scout and find out what was going on with the pigeons.

Cherubim was arguing that we shouldn’t miss our timing, but Seraphim was stopping him, so things weren't going his way. The timing Cherubim was talking about wasn't even that great, as things were starting to heat up among the pigeons.

There were constant discussions and debates; fights would even break out sometimes.

It had gotten to the point that the way the elder pigeons flapped their wings while raising their voices made them look like true politicians. The party had split, and there were even pigeons who created parties for the sake of opposing their fellow pigeons.

“It’ll be difficult in situations like this,” I said.

“If they really thought we were in a crisis, they wouldn’t split parties like this. It

wasn't an emergency, so I'm sure they think it's okay to take their time. Does that mean they don't think of humans as threats?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"Probably because I would've thought the same thing, noona. If I were to exaggerate a little, they were probably looking at the humans the same way we're looking at these dummies… You also don't think these dummies will be a threat," I said.

"That's different from this. Cherubim got a good beating from Cha Hee-Ra," she reminded me.

"That's why I said I was exaggerating. This works because we think we're superior. It's because they already think that they're superior to humans that these bastards are interested in the new human race nonsense," I continued.

"I agree with that. They probably think they can change mankind. If what you're saying is true, that means Thronus and Cherubim are the only ones who think of humans as equals. Pretty ironic, right?" she asked.

"They're the same. If I were asked who's more evil, then I'd say the idiots who agreed with the new human race plan are more evil. In other words, we can take as much holy power as we can from them. Are the presentation materials ready?" I asked.

"Yes. I just need to edit for the finishing touches. It only seemed like yesterday when Seraphim came and saw this. Time flies so fast. This is what I don't like about working with fun things. Time passes too fast," she complained.

"I'll head out first and set things up," I told her.

"Okay. Good luck with your presentation," she said.

I started walking and soon saw the stage where the presentation was going to take place.

'This should be fun.'

Honestly, I didn't have much to show them because the experiment was still a work in progress, and all I needed to present was our progress. I was sure this was enough to make the investors take interest.

Eventually, the elder pigeons started showing up one by one. When they first saw

me, they looked at me as if they were belittling me, but not anymore. They were actually greeting me with smiles, so I had to nod at them. Seraphim was already here, and even though Cherubim wasn't here, the pigeons in his party were here.

'We probably hurt his pride.'

I obviously sent him an invitation, but he had to have been so full of pride that he didn't want to come here himself.

'Why is he here?'

Thronus also sat down while looking around, and I heard him talking in the chaotic room. To make things worse, his voice was getting louder. I knew there was going to be conflict because the two parties that would argue every time they stumble upon each other were in the same room.

Of course, this was intentional on my part, as things would be more impactful this way.

'It's time.'

The lights went out, and the room got loud once again.

A click echoed, and the beam of light shone on me. I didn't think I needed to exaggerate because if an item were bound to succeed, it would be readily apparent. Rather than wasting time with a strange introduction, it was better to show the results right away.

I clapped once, I saw the miniature version of the continent.

'Great timing, noona.'

The quality was higher than what we showed Seraphim a few days ago because everyone could actually see the dummies moving and living their lives. Some went on adventures, while others simply enjoyed their daily lives. Each of them showed different behaviors and lived their life on the continent in their own way.

The room went quiet as everyone stared agape at the hologram. Even the pigeons in Cherubim's party stared agape. Of course, this wasn't the end of it.

I clapped again, and the hologram changed to depict a city. There was a forest that connected two cities and many other villages. There were dungeons within the forests, large mountains and oceans, temples, and then another large city.

Every single city and village was filled with dummies. There were indeed five million individuals living on the vast map. Of course, it was impossible to show them every single one of those five million individuals.

“T-that's…” Mr. Seraphim was really satisfied. He was convinced that the coin he had invested in would go to the moon.

“It’s not an exaggeration to say that this system is a miniature version of the continent. The dummies have their own distinct personalities, and they do not move based on orders. In other words, there are five million unique personalities and behavior patterns. You heard it right. Five million. Dominions, me, and Mr. Seraphim were the ones who created this small world,” I said.

“This is…”

“That’s crazy. I mean, amazing is the better word.”

‘It’s amazing, you bastard.’

“I can’t believe it…”

‘Why can’t you believe it? It’s possible as long as you have data.’

"We did everything possible on the test server, and it is the first step on the new human race plan. The new human race plan was just a theory, but we decided to create a small world to see if it is feasible.

"Yes, you're right. The ones who have been opposing this plan were right. This plan is risky, and it is not perfect. I'm not sure what kind of hardships are awaiting us once we execute the plan, but take a look…

"Look at these beings moving in this small world," I urged.

The scene went on fast-forward, and the continent was destroyed before our eyes. The dummies screamed and writhed in pain. The cities enveloped in light went dark, and civilization ceased to exist on the continent. The continent was slowly reset, and

a few pigeons had to have been disappointed because I heard them sigh.

“This is the result that you want,” I said.

“…”

“Is this truly the result that you want?” I questioned.

“…”

“A noble cause is useless if we were to use the wrong method for it. We can’t change anything through negative and violent methods. It’s the process, not the result, that makes our noble cause nobler. We've been thinking, and we’re here because we can empathize. It doesn’t matter whether you agree with my opinion or not. The important thing is that we empathize with their pain and the continent’s pain,” I continued.

“…”

“To empathize with the pain of the outcome, you must be able to empathize with the pain with the process. To empathize with the pain of the forest, you must be able to empathize with the pain of the trees. You must be prepared to give up what you have and face their pain with sincerity. You think humans possess infinite potential, but you’re the same as them. Our potential is infinite as well. The potential of the new human race that we've created living beyond the continent and across all dimensions is before our eyes,” I explained.

“…”

“If we have the right theory, innovative technology to support this theory, and manpower to join us, we can change the world. We’ll become the masters of the world. After driving out the demons controlling the incompetent gods and the poor humans, we can become the gods of the new world. We’ll be remembered as the new creators of the new human race, everyone!” I shouted.

“…”

“Invest! In the future! In hope! Invest in the new human race! Invest in the happy ever after we are going to create! Invest!” I yelled.

CHAPTER 727
DOUBT AND CONFIDENCE (1)

It wouldn't be strange at all if these pigeons stood up and requested a handshake from me. I could tell that the atmosphere was starting to heat up. No one was whistling or shouting, but I heard them cheering and clapping. Moreover, the pigeons in our party stood up and were clapping. It felt like an award ceremony rather than a presentation. They even gave me a standing ovation—Yes, a standing ovation.

Thronus looked dumbfounded, but the pigeons from the opposition party looked confused. They probably didn't expect us to make so much progress in such a short period of time. Actually, I was sure they didn't expect us to materialize it and present it like this because it was simply a theory.

It was a result that could only be achieved by investing a large amount of holy power and time. The word the pigeons of the opposition party used often for their argument was *theoretically.*

They said it wasn't realistic, it could never happen, and that we were simply being delusional. Those people looked annoyed by our success, but of course, this was nothing more than the world of the dummies. It wasn't meaningful because they were nothing but pieces of data imbued with holy power. However, the pigeons saw the potential in the new technology that would support the theory.

'Innovative technology is great.'

First of all, it gave me confidence, and it made all the bullshit that I had said sound like reasonable bullshit. The result was right before their eyes, and even a smart pigeon was probably thinking along the lines of this—*it's possible with that technology. We can just get ready to fix the numerous errors and bugs. The cost can still be minimized as well.*

They were investors, so they would definitely look for ways to reduce the cost.

'The timeline might also get shorter. After all, we can just take the path we've already paved.'

It'd be perfect if the timeline could be shortened. This was a safe investment and coin, but of course, it wasn't enough. One had to be a trustworthy CEO as well. Fortunately, Lee Ki-Young Coin was a coin they could purchase with peace of mind.

One of the Four Angels was supporting me, so it was definitely pretty safe in their eyes.

It was similar to how even a small company with innovative technology wouldn't receive any investors, even if they were to beg people to invest in them. However, it would be a different story if the chairman of a large company was with them.

In addition to throwing away their money to invest in the company, they would also applaud the company for making a technological breakthrough. After all, it wasn't strange for a young entrepreneur to attract investor interest if they were being supported financially by a large company. This applied to the pigeons as well.

"I'll invest!"

'Countless handshake requests!'

"Amazing! Simply amazing! *Hahaha!*"

'Yeah, I know I'm amazing. Did you just figure that out?'

"You're definitely different, Mr. Lee Ki-Young! Even Seraphim is really amazing. A new human race plan. It's a completely different and brand-new plan. It's highly feasible as well."

I could feel the opposition party getting swayed.

"Of course, it doesn't change the fact that we still need to be careful, but at least I won't be attacked about it being a groundless theory," I said.

"Did you see his face just now? He looks really gloomy. We should be investing. Yes, we must."

"Do you truly believe this is possible?! That's just a program, not the human race."

"There are five million personalities in there. I think it's safe to say that we can at least prepare for numerous variables."

“That’s true.”

“But—”

“Please show respect! We came here to have a meeting! If you’d like to oppose this idea, do it when we hold a meeting about it!”

“Are you done?!”

“That’s right!”

‘This is messy, and I like it.’

“Stop it with this improper behavior! The presentation isn’t even over yet. Apologize right now!”

“You must apologize!”

“How can I do that right now?!”

“Apologize!”

“We’re in a state of war right now! I can’t believe you’re falling for absurd tricks like this!”

“A state of war?! *Ha!* Our opponents are the humans. How can you even call this a state of war?!”

‘Good point. I feel insulted, but I like that attitude. I’ll kill you with ease.’

“Those humans killed our troops! In other words, we don’t have the budget to do something like this!”

“If you’re that worried, then we can just use the elders' hidden fund stash!”

“That’s not what I’m trying to say!”

"If you’re not going to invest in this, then leave! Get out!”

‘Shit, it has gotten really chaotic.’

“The humans will not agree with this crazy plan!”

‘That’s right, but they won’t agree to your plan either.’

I thought this was the right time to calm the situation.

I was about to clap my hands…

“Stop.”

The voice hadn't come from Seraphim. I turned and saw a familiar blue-haired pigeon.

‘Cherubim.’

I wasn’t sure how long he had been watching, but I could see that he looked gloomy. Rather than being surprised by my innovative technology, he seemed dissatisfied with the current situation.

It was understandable. Who wouldn't be dissatisfied when things had gotten so chaotic?

‘This is unfortunate.’

Obviously, he was the culprit behind the conflict, but he had to have been disturbed by the fact that the conflict had gotten *this* bad.

He probably didn’t notice when he was part of the conflict, but I was sure he managed to see the situation clearly as an observer from afar. Of course, this was just an assumption of mine, but my assumption had to be accurate to a certain degree, as he was just a normal pigeon in the end.

“What kind of disgrace is this?” Cherubim questioned.

“…”

“…”

‘Has this bastard caught on?’

Cherubim looked like he was thinking along the lines of this: *so that Lee Ki-Young bastard's goal was this?* Cherubim looked like he had seen through our plans, but it didn't matter whether I was right or wrong.

Cherubim looked like he had come to his senses, and I saw him trying to compose himself.

Had I ended up giving too many hints? Had it gotten pretty obvious? How come he realized what was going on? Was I supposed to hold back a bit? Had I focused too much on creating conflict?

Well, it didn't really matter, but… I was kind of regretting the fact that I hadn't been checking on Cherubim recently. Regardless, he wouldn't be able to turn around the public sentiment.

'What are you going to do about it?'

Dominions and Seraphim were on my side. Could he not see how many supporters I had on my side? What could he do about it? If he decided to blame me for the conflict among the pigeons, I'd kill and bury him in the pigeon society, but he probably wouldn't make such a stupid political remark.

I couldn't help but expect something from him because he didn't really look like the type to use his brain. The brains of the Four Angels were Dominions and Seraphim. Thronus was just an incompetent bastard, while Cherubim was insignificant.

However, he didn't seem to be that big of an idiot, and while I was getting worried about him potentially trying to kill me…

"I would like to ask a question."

Cherubim threw the dice on a different option.

"I was actually about to take questions, Cherubim," I said.

This was probably the best decision for me.

"I want to know how you plan on carrying out this plan. I don't agree with this plan, but I can see the potential, so I want to know how you plan on executing it. There's a high chance that the humans won't agree with your plan," he asked.

"…"

"…"

"You're right. The humans won't agree to the new human race plan, but is that really important? Your first plan was carried out without asking for their permission in the first place. The humans won't notice the changes happening to the continent since they don't have access to the system," I replied.

"But it doesn't change the fact that they're hostile toward us," he said.

"It'll be difficult to undo what's already been done, but… we're thinking about proposing peace to the humans. We'll apologize and compensate them for the damages they've suffered…" I said.

"How come you're suggesting that when we had just clashed swords and shields not too long ago?" he questioned.

"Humans aren't stupid, Cherubim. I have been watching them for a long time, and they are perfectly capable of becoming either enemies or friends, depending on their vested interests.

"Obviously, more people will be hostile to us, but there are definitely people out there thinking that it's just too difficult to continue this war. If they don't open the door, then we just have to knock on the door slowly. We have a lot of time, and I mean *a lot* of time," I explained.

"…"

"…"

'It isn't like him to think like this.'

Cherubim approached me slowly.

'This is within his attack range, right?'

I imagined him grabbing and breaking my pale neck, but he had already decided not to do anything extreme, so there was no need to be frightened.

Be confident, Ki-Young. Stand your ground.

Cherubim stared at me for a while and extended his hand.

Clearly, he was suggesting that we shake hands.

'Why is this bastard so rude?'

I know the mood was already ruined, but how else would I describe his behavior of walking onto the stage in the middle of my presentation? He was germaphobic, and I thought perhaps he was a bit of a narcissist, but if he wanted a handshake, I would give it to him.

I extended my hand and grabbed his hand. He didn't say anything else, but this gesture probably meant that he was willing to support my plan.

I heard a round of applause. The incompetent Thronus would follow the trend in the end, and the opposition party would gradually disappear. Of course, I was sure Cherubim didn't want that to happen.

'He's planning on getting into our ranks and digging around internally for something to nitpick.'

I was sure his primary plan was to reveal my identity, and his secondary plan was to dig deeper into our plan because digging for information internally was better than wandering around outside.

Just like me, he had made the same decision. He'd look for an opportunity and stab me in the back at a critical juncture. I had already seen through Cherubim's plan, so I decided to tease him a bit.

"Are you agreeing with my plan?" I asked.

"…"

I decided to look at him with a wicked smile.

"So you are agreeing to my plan," I said.

"…"

I wonder how his face would change if I were to start laughing.

“So you’ve finally realized what’s right and wrong,” I added.

“…”

However, Cherubim remained calm. I smiled wickedly at him, but he didn’t react.

Eventually, he started mumbling in a voice so low that the others couldn’t possibly hear him.

“I love humans.”

“That’s an honor,” I said.

“But when I see you, I can’t help but vomit. You’re a parasite of the continent,” Cherubim said.

It had been a while since I felt this way. I didn’t think it was possible, so I did a double take, but the unique feeling didn’t go away. The unique feeling was so rare and distinct that I became sure of it.

The holy light inside of me had discovered his true identity—he was a demon all along.

CHAPTER 728
DOUBT AND CONFIDENCE (2)

'Shit, I knew it.'

I found it difficult to breathe as the miasma he was emitting toward me was so thick with darkness that I felt nauseous just standing in front of him. Just then, I realized that the puzzle pieces were finally coming together.

'How dare you talk about wanting to vomit when you're the dirty demon here?'

I finally understood why he wanted to go to war so much and why he was against the new human race plan. The things he had done had never been for mankind, and the bullshit about controlling the current human population for the future of mankind was nothing but nonsense.

There was no way this foul-smelling scum genuinely loved humans.

Everything was a lie. It was an act to consume the negative feelings of humans through the war and create chaos on the continent.

I felt a shiver down my spine when I thought about his thoroughness and how he had been hiding behind a mask for an incalculable amount of time.

Perhaps the masked hero's greatest enemy was Cherubim.

I had found it strange when he had firmly opposed the idea, and it was all because he got a bit too worked up to oppose it. That was enough clue for me to become suspicious of him, and I smiled upon realizing that everything had finally fallen into place.

This bastard was prepared to transform back into his original demon form, but I didn't want to get ahead of myself and provoke him into doing that.

'He's one of the Four Angels, and he's a role model of many pigeons.'

The first thing I had to do was isolate him.

It was a tactic I had always used whenever I was playing politics with just about anyone. I had to separate my target from their group. It was absurd how he had been quietly sitting in the meeting room, and it was sickening how he wanted to lead the new human race plan when he had been opposing it quite vigorously until now.

I was bothered by his gaze, as he was looking at me with eyes that seemed to tell me that he was going to reveal my identity.

'You started this fight.'

I was sure he was warning me as well.

'I'm going to watch everything you do,' or 'You won't be able to do anything stupid.'

I found it uncomfortable to have someone keeping tabs on me, but I didn't think it was that big of a problem. I had never sent a quest, and I hadn't been using the Telescope. I was sure the quests and the Telescope were the main reasons he had decided to join us. Since he couldn't find any proof outside, he wanted to join our camp as a spy and gather as much evidence as he could before stabbing me in the back.

'He's a smart pigeon.'

His decision had totally caught me off guard.

"How are things going?" Cherubim asked.

"We've been experimenting, and we've obtained somewhat of a satisfactory result. I'll report them to you as soon as we get results, so you don't have to pressure me so much, Cherubim," Dominions answered.

"Isn't your progress too slow compared to how flashy your presentation was, Dominions?" he asked.

"It's not slow at all. It hasn't been a month since we announced the new human race plan. We've been collecting data, and we need more time to find every single error possible," Dominions replied.

“If you use the technology you’ve been showing off so much, three days should be enough time. I wonder if there’s a reason for not making an announcement. How are the dummies doing? How many different cycles have you done? Is there something you can’t tell me?” Cherubim questioned.

“…”

“I’m an investor as well, Dominions. I recall investing a lot of holy power… I naturally have the right to know how things are going,” Cherubim said.

‘She’s annoyed.’

I was sure Lee Ji-Hye had never dealt with someone like Cherubim before.

Lee Ji-Hye had dealt with many people, such as people connected to demons, the demonic old gramps of the Blue Guild, the psychopathic murderer, Demon Worshiper Ito Sota, and Demon Summoner Jin Cheong, but Cherubim was unique, so it was actually refreshing to see him pester Lee Ji-Hye.

‘It’s my first time as well.’

People would normally hide their true intentions; It was normal for people to hide their beliefs and claims as well as the weapons up their sleeves.

Hiding a knife behind one’s back while smiling at their enemy was the standard method of stabbing their enemy in the back, but Cherubim was different.

He wasn’t hiding a knife to begin with, and he didn’t bother hiding his beliefs and claims. He wasn’t shouting with all his might, saying that he was against us, but his behavior made it clear that he was hostile to us. It was also the reason he had invested a large amount of holy power despite knowing that we were wasting it.

‘Maybe I shouldn’t have announced it publicly.’

Cherubim had even used his holy power to cover the elderly pigeons’ share. He quickly became the largest shareholder in the Lee Ki-Young subsidiary market. He was right. As I had explained at the investment briefing, the investors were entitled to know about the project's progress. This all happened because that bastard never assumed that we would waste his holy power.

It wasn't like we were at a huge disadvantage. It wasn’t the time to think about defending the rights of the company, and he hadn't thought that far either. The things he could do were limited.

‘Putting pressure.’

Cherubim was putting pressure on us to make sure that we wouldn't be able to do whatever we wanted to do. He also wanted to prevent us from manipulating the result and prevent us from causing confusion on the elder pigeons' side.

Obviously, things had gotten a bit uncomfortable for us because we now had more people we had to deceive.

“I remember there is still a lot of time left before our first official presentation. Just because we’ve been experimenting doesn’t mean we’ll immediately have results. It’s not that we don’t understand how you feel, Cherubim. Please refrain from behaving too aggressively. You’re not the only one with high expectations. I want to get things done perfectly as well,” Dominions said.

“You’re overreacting, Dominions. I just want to know how things are going,” Cherubim replied.

“…”

“You put on a good show on stage, but in the end, what you showed was just a vision. Of course, I know that’s enough to show how valuable your vision is, but there are many who want the exact data. I’m just representing those people,” he said.

“I’ll make sure to show it to you as soon as possible,” Dominions told him.

“I’d appreciate it if you could give me the exact date,” Cherubim requested.

‘Stop it, you bastard.’

I was sure Ji-Hye noona wanted to say that to him.

“The humans—”

“We’ve been attempting to make a connection with them, Mr. Cherubim,” I chimed in.

"…"

"Of course, most of them haven't been so receptive, but… as I had mentioned last time, if the situation changes, their interest is bound to change as well. There are people who have decided to join us," I continued.

"Are you sure?" he asked.

"I got it done, not Lee Ki-Young, Cherubim."

"Seraphim."

"Of course, there are only a few of them at the moment, but I heard that they're going to try and recruit more," Seraphim continued.

"…"

"Everything is going fine, Cherubim. You don't have to be so suspicious about it," Seraphim reassured.

"I want to know exactly who those people are," Cherubim requested.

If I were asked if his upright mindset was effective, I would shake my head. It was like playing rock, paper, and scissors with someone who had warned us that he was going to use nothing but rock. That was exactly what Cherubim was doing right now.

'I understand it, though.'

He was probably thinking that he was putting enough pressure on me, and he had to be thinking that pressure was enough to limit my movements. He might even be contemplating his next move at the movement.

'The first step is to keep me in check.'

Controlling the new human race plan with the holy power he had invested was his way of keeping me in check, and he did great.

He was probably thinking that if he were to corner me, he'd be able to widen his working range. It didn't seem like a big deal on first impression, but if he was trying to win over our supporters, then things could get a bit complicated.

So far, the parties and I had been a team, but there could be a rift in my relationship with the pigeon parties depending on Cherubim's movement. They were comrades supporting me in my new human race plan, but they were still investors.

In other words, I had to give them results. If his actions of keeping me in check ended up being somewhat effective, it wouldn't be that difficult to deduce what this blue-haired bastard would do. He would definitely stab me in the heart from behind once he had won over the elders.

'Give me my money back! You scum!'

Hundreds of pigeons would say that while furiously flapping their wings.

The meeting room that was heading toward a bright future filled with dreams would become a meeting room full of victims who had been deceived by the fraud Lee Ki-Young. They would definitely strangle us to death.

Basically, Lee Ji-Hye and I had to be extra careful with Cherubim around.

'How much holy power have we gathered so far?'

I couldn't say the exact number, but I could probably change one or two continental rules with it. Everyone had invested in the new human race project for the same reason. There were pigeons who had invested all the holy power that they had, while others had to borrow from other pigeons. In other words, if this business were to fail, half of the elder pigeons would drown us in the Mirror Lake.

'It could be as shocking as the IMF crisis.'

Of course, I wasn't sure if that was the right expression.

Anyway, Cherubim seemed to have overlooked that part. Cherubim wanted to destroy the new human race plan, but every single investor in the plan wanted the plan to succeed. Everyone was holding hands and praying that the coin would go to the moon.

'Who do you think will become the villain?'

I would become the villain, but…

'You think I'll let that happen?'

But if an external force was trying to ruin my work, I wouldn't become public enemy number one. The pigeons and I would die and rise together; we shared a common destiny, so the external force trying to destroy us would become our enemy.

"Today's meeting was shitty. I was so annoyed earlier that I felt like dying. He kept nitpicking every single thing," Lee Ji-Hye complained.

"I'll handle it soon," I told her.

"What's up with that wicked smile, oppa?" she asked.

"Noona, what would you do if the company you had invested in started becoming unstable because of tabloids?" I asked.

"That's random," she commented.

"You think you'll despise the person who had spread the rumors?" I asked.

"Of course, I'll resent that bastard. Most people would feel the same. If there are variables, then you blame the variables, and if there's someone we can resent, then we immediately resent them. If the business fails even though there were variables, then I'd question my own judgment, but that wouldn't be the case, right?" she answered.

"You think so, too, right?"

"But why—*Ah…* Wow… you're really scummy. Wait, do you really think that will work? They're pigeons, not humans, so they may be a little more rational," she asked.

"They're not that different from humans, noona. If anything, they're worse," I told her.

The words I heard from Benigoa a long time ago suddenly popped into my head.

I believe it was during the time when we were talking about Altanus.

"So you guys aren't perfect either."

[That's right, we're not perfect. Keep that in mind, my proud Father Lee Ki-Young. We're not perfect, either. We're incomplete. We're just standing in a different position from those on the continent, but we're not that different from you. Keep that in mind.]

I recall having that kind of conversation with her, and I understood why Benigoa kept emphasizing that they weren't perfect.

I was sure she didn't say that for this moment, but she probably wanted to tell me that the beings we were about to fight weren't all that different from us. They weren't perfect, and they weren't that different from humans. I agree with Benigoa.

Lee Ji-Hye smiled at me.

Bang!

An elder pigeon flung the door open and rushed toward us.

"T-the humans who have offered their hands to us… they've been attacked by masked angels, and they're dying!"

My artificial angels—no, the pigeons under Cherubim had finally made a move and had backstabbed the poor humans who had agreed to our suggestion of peace because they were tired of war.

"I-Is that true?!" I shouted with a frown.

CHAPTER 729
DOUBT AND CONFIDENCE (3)

'It's killing two birds with one stone.'

It wasn't exactly that bad. It was advantageous in more ways than one. Taking care of the traitors who had decided to join us to stab us in the back would prove beneficial to the humans as well, and I also could reveal the identity of a demon pretending like he was an angel to live a double life. The elder pigeon looked like his world was crashing down, and I completely understood his feelings.

'Well, he did roll the dice as well.'

I remembered him vividly as he had invested a ton of holy power, and these pigeons weren't exactly receiving a stable amount of holy power.

If Benigoa or that Elune scum were like salaried employees working for large companies and were getting paid every month, then these pigeons were like freelancers.

In other words, these pigeons were like beggars who had to live with the holy power they had acquired from their most recent gig. I was sure they were getting gigs somewhere, but they weren't exactly stable gigs.

'That's why they can't just stand still and watch.'

The situation was bad, but the pigeon didn't seem curious about the identity of the assailants. The only thing the elder pigeon cared about was how we were going to handle the issue. They felt so cornered that they couldn't even think about deducing the source of the issue.

"W-What… should we do?" the elder asked.

'What do you mean? It's obvious. We have no other choice. We just need to bear with it, don't you agree?'

“We’ll have to see if there’s another way to handle this. Actually, how did this happen in the first place? Were there any other orders?” I asked.

“We don’t have enough information right now. T-The battle has continued on the front line right now, and it looks like the humans are moving to the front line. They’re pressuring the allied forces… and are even heading toward the temple,” he answered.

‘They’ve responded quickly.’

This was like shooting a signal flare.

The two sides had entered a temporary ceasefire but were keeping tabs on each other.

It was like they were saying, “*We’re kind of tired, but how are you guys doing? Ah, you guys are tired, too? Then let’s take a break. You know we need it.*”

They had to reorganize their troops, and there were too many things to handle at once because the large battle had happened out of the blue. In other words, they were just suggesting not to invade each other’s territory for now.

However, the angels stabbed the humans in the back after suggesting a ceasefire. Of course, even if the damage wasn’t that big, the fact that a signal flare was fired was important. There was no reason for the humans to stand by without doing anything.

The area where Kim Hyun-Sung was staying was in a complete lull, but it was a significant fact. It was a fact that the hero had been resurrected, and the light had obtained the power to fight once again.

At this point, Jung Ha-Yan had probably recovered her mana.

Our gray light warrior was probably warming up because he had to prove himself, and Cha Hee-Ra had to have regained her consciousness a long time ago and was ready to fight.

Meanwhile, our Hye-Jin was working based on the manual and was pressuring the frontline.

However, the fact that they were working around the advanced bases meant that

they probably wouldn't be able to get close to the heart of the pigeons, but I was sure the pigeons were shocked by the fact that the humans were determined to reclaim their territories.

'Have the dragons decided to join?'

I wasn't certain, but the chances were high.

Even if it were only a small number of troops, the fact that they had hatched out of their eggs meant that they were prepared to gain air supremacy.

In other words, the backstabbing was a bad thing, and once Kim Hyun-Sung started moving, things would get a bit more interesting.

Once he had received the revised manual from Alps, he'd start moving again.

"T-the corrupted sword has also started moving…" the elder added.

'That's right. It's about time he starts moving.'

I was sure that he still hadn't snapped back to his senses, but his movement was significant to the allied forces.

Normally, this wouldn't be considered a huge problem for the pigeons because they just had to do what they had been doing so far. It was easy. They just had to give up what they had and simply repeat what they had done.

However, they couldn't do that right now. After all, they had just invested in a great plan.

"I must return. We need to have a meeting right now to come up with countermeasures…"

"They've already gathered, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. I-I'll take you there," the elder said.

'That makes my job a lot easier.'

As soon as I started walking, I heard angry voices everywhere.

"How did this happen?!"

“Another war?! How?!”

“What’s going on right now? How does this even make sense? Did someone give permission?”

“That’s not important. We have to figure out how to fix this.”

“Let’s send the troops for now. We can’t let humans step into this holy temple.”

“What do you mean to send the troops?! How can we send our troops in our current situation? This is no different from suggesting that we fight them. We must tell them that there was some kind of mistake and misunderstanding!”

“The humans have always been hostile to us. This is no time for ridiculous remarks. It’s time to fight.”

“We’re so close to executing the new human race plan, so why should we waste our funds on war?! Think about the holy power we've already used for the plan. We must evaluate the situation a little more rationally.”

‘You guys don’t look rational at all.’

It felt like I was watching ants in the financial market on the first day of the Great Depression. The sight of everyone holding an envelope-looking item tightly in their hands was hard to look at. Their anxiousness was making them feel like going crazy, so the situation had to have been a bit more difficult to handle than I thought.

‘It’s a mess. A huge mess.’

Everyone looked at me when I showed up.

Ji-Hye noona next to me started acting to show everyone the severity of the situation, and I noticed her holding in a frown.

The fact that she was pretending to hide her expression as much as possible came as a surprise to me, which made my expression change briefly ever so slightly.

However, the pigeons had to have caught the brief change in my expression because I saw their faces getting gloomier.

“Calm down everyone,” I said.

“*Ah*, Mr. Lee Ki-Young.”

“Mr. Lee Ki-Young, have you heard the news?”

“Mr. Lee Ki-Young!”

I took a deep breath.

“Have you heard?”

It was important to continue the conversation while pretending like nothing was wrong.

“Yes, I heard the news about the humans leading the troops toward the temple and that the corrupted sword has also started moving,” I answered.

“W-What should we…”

“No need to panic. This won’t change our plan. Send troops to maintain the frontline, and I think it’s best if we meet with them again. Of course, I’m not sure if this is enough to calm them down, but fighting them right now isn’t good for our plan,” I explained.

“But…”

“Go on,” I said.

“Wouldn’t it be a good idea to reduce the budget now?”

“We've already reduced the budget to its limit. The holy power you've invested is being used as fuel for the tiny continent that we have made. We've already scheduled tens and thousands of simulations, and we also need holy power to access the system maintaining the continent.

"To put it bluntly, we are not in the position to reduce the budget. Of course, we can halt all simulations and retrieve the holy power that we still haven't used, but that means suffering a huge loss.” I answered.

“How… big of a loss…”

“We'll use about one-third of the holy power—no, we already used more than that,” I replied.

‘Can I retrieve it? I can, but it won’t be just a big loss. It will completely ruin my plan.’

“There are no other issues in the plan, and the experiment is going well. We just need to resolve this issue and overcome this crisis,” I told them.

Honestly, the founder saying that there weren't any issues usually meant that everything was over, but that wasn’t really important because they’d end up believing what they wanted to believe.

They believed that this coin would go to the moon, so they just had to endure it long enough. A crisis was before us, but they believed that they would end up standing on the moon with the Lee Ki-Young Coin so long as they remained hodling.

That kind of belief motivated them to hodl…

“If any of you want to retrieve the holy power you invested, I’ll return it to you right now. Of course, as stated in the contract, I won’t be able to return the full amount…” I reminded them.

“…”

“…”

“I know you’re worried, and I completely understand how you feel, but it’s in times like this that we must stand united. If everyone works together, we can overcome any crisis. It’s just an accident, and we can handle it.” I continued.

“…”

“…”

“We can fix this mistake. We'll experience some damage, but if we just deal with that, then we can keep climbing up. The important thing to do is make preparations so that this kind of issue doesn’t happen again. Who and why did they deploy the troops?” I asked.

“We’re finding out right now, but…”

“I see. I’m not certain, but…” I paused.

“…”

“There seems to be a strategic force.” I continued.

“…”

“Of course, it’s not something I can discuss right now, but I believe there’s a force that doesn’t want the new human race plan to succeed. I’m sure they intentionally dispatched the troops,” I said.

“That’s strange.”

“It’s strange indeed. However, things wouldn't have gotten this far if they had no intentions of ruining the plan. The fact that the pitiful humans have offered their hands to us was supposed to be top secret. I know all of you are aware of the progress of my work, but the only ones who know the exact progress of the plan are Dominions, Seraphim, Cherubim, and myself,” I said.

“…”

“Things got this far because—”

“No troops were dispatched internally,” someone said.

I turned and saw Cherubim pretending to remain calm.

‘He appears like a protagonist every time.’

Cherubim didn’t look happy, and I got the feeling that he was aware of the fact that things weren’t going so well. He had to have done his own investigation because he had confirmed that no troops were deployed internally.

At this point, he was probably aware of the fact that he had landed in a spider’s web.

“The accident was probably caused by the troops maintaining the frontline outside, not the troops on standby inside the temple. It was all planned, and haven't I told

you? There's a strategic force at work here. Any evidence of deploying the troops must have been destroyed," I explained.

"What a ridiculous assumption," Cherubim commented.

'He's more cautious than I thought.'

I could tell he was being careful about what he was saying.

If he had caught on to the fact that this spider web was created for him, then he had no choice but to move cautiously.

He had determined that he lacked information. I could tell that he was thinking about why the angels had suddenly attacked the humans, what cards I had up my sleeve, just what exactly my goal was, and what I had prepared to fulfill that goal.

"There are things that are bothering me for it to be a simple assumption, and one of them is the fact that there are many who are against my new human race plan. You know that better than I do, Cherubim. I can still remember that you were against my plan…" I reminded him.

"…"

"No way. There's…"

"…"

There's no way, right?" I asked.

Cherubim's gaze held undisguised disgust as he stared at me, so I had to look as disgusted as possible. I squinted my eyes and smiled mockingly at him. I had to display an expression that would make him want to punch me.

Moments like these really were exhilarating…

"Do you want a war against humans?" I asked.

"…"

"I didn't believe it, but it must be true. There are those who want to kill innocent

humans to satisfy themselves, and they're hiding like rats in this holy temple while wearing an angel's mask…" I muttered.

"…"

"How tragic—it's so tragic…" I muttered.

CHAPTER 730
DOUBT AND CONFIDENCE (4)

“How tragic—it's so tragic,” I said.

The room became quiet.

I wasn’t specifically referring to Cherubim, but everyone instinctively knew who I was talking about. I wanted to beat him up right now, but I had to be cautious because I wasn’t dumb enough to go all in without preparations.

I felt kind of embarrassed because everyone was looking at Cherubim and me, but Light Ki-Young was born to be on the stage. I actually enjoyed the attention.

I turned my head with a determined look and saw the blue-haired angel staring at me. I could tell that my vague words were making him think. He knew that he would look bad if he were to raise his voice, which meant he couldn't even deny what I was saying.

In the end, he chose to agree with what I said because that was all he could do.

“…”

“…”

“I agree with you. Looks like there’s a rat among us,” Cherubim said.

My theory was confirmed.

“Yes, that seems to be the case,” I said.

Cherubim was also the type to make the most reasonable choice, and it seemed that he wanted to take his team. Just like how I didn't want to go all-in, I was sure he didn't want to make a move as well, as I was clearly cornering him.

I was sure there were many things he wanted to say, but there was a sequence to

everything.

The build-up to the climax was necessary and extremely important. If possible, I wanted him to run rampant and jump around, but he wasn't *that* stupid. He actually looked at me as if he was challenging me, and I could already see what he was going to do next.

'He'll try to lighten the mood.'

"Also, was that question for me?"

He probably asked because he felt like he needed to defend himself at least once.

"Which question are you referring to…" I asked.

"Whether I wanted to go to war with the humans," Cherubim replied.

"That's not true," I told him.

"If things go wrong, you and the elders here aren't the only ones who will suffer. Everyone here knows that I'll take a hit as well. I'm not making an excuse here, but I'd like for you to apologize for what you just said.

"I had already offered my hand to join the new human race plan. I won't deny the fact that I wanted to maintain our previous plan we had, but that was already water under the bridge. Everyone is on the same boat, and opinions can change," he explained.

'So he's going to feign ignorance, huh?'

"If my remarks made you feel uncomfortable, then I apologize. My words weren't aimed toward you. Things just happened out of the blue… I must've gotten confused. I would like to formally apologize once again," I said.

"I accept your apology," he said.

"However, I'm telling the truth. There's a rat here in the temple. I'm not really sure of their goal, but we must join hands and find them. We don't know what they're capable of doing, after all," I suggested.

“I told you this before. The humans who had offered their hands to us had been attacked. The only ones who know of their existence are Dominions, Seraphim, you, and myself. Of course, we can’t completely rule out the possibility of this information getting leaked outside, but if what you’re saying is true, then it’s only right that we put you on the list of suspects,” he pointed out.

“I don’t have any motives,” I said.

“That’s not true. Let’s say you’re still human,” he said.

“I’m not human, and the wings on my back are proof of that,” I told him.

“Then how about we assume that you’re still supporting them?” he asked.

“I have already received judgment for my sins. I know better than anyone what’s right and which path is truly the right path for the continent. I'm involved with the new human race plan for that reason. You can't say I'm supporting them because our essence is entirely different from each other,” I answered.

“I’m not saying that you’re the culprit, but if we assume that’s the case, then you'll have a motive for doing so. Those humans are your enemies, as you can be considered a traitor to humanity,” he explained.

“I don’t have the ability to lead the angels, Cherubim. I’m not in a position to make important decisions or give orders. If I really am that rat, how would I be able to win them over to my side?” I questioned.

It was true. I didn't have that kind of power, and he was well aware of that.

“There’s also the possibility of you doing something in the form of an angel,” he said.

“All you do is make assumptions, so I don’t quite understand what you’re trying to say, Cherubim. Are you saying that I created something that looks like an angel and sent it to the humans to get rid of those humans?

"Of course, you don’t have proof either, right? *Ah*, you said it was an assumption. I forgot, but I'm curious why you even mentioned such a simple assumption,” I told him.

“There’s no need to overanalyze everything. As I said before, I didn’t call you a rat. All

I said was that we can't exclude you from the list of suspects. I only said it because we need to be open to all possibilities," he explained.

"Yes, we should do that, but what you're saying is…"

"Of course, I won't deny the fact that I'm part of the list as well. If an investigation is required, I'll willingly participate, but I expect the same from you, Seraphim, and Dominions. If there are others besides us who have to be investigated…" he paused.

'Take the bull by the horns.'

It was like him to think that way. He looked as if he could act confidently because he hadn't done anything wrong, and I was sure he thought about the possibility of me fabricating the evidence. If that weren't the case, he wouldn't be acting that way.

'Does he have something up his sleeve?'

Cherubim was probably thinking that now was the time to make preparations and believed he had enough information to defend himself.

I looked around and saw the pigeons wearing questioning looks.

"In that case…"

"We need to create a new organization and one where the first four people who have been chosen to be part of the suspect list cannot be a part of. I'm sure we'll find some kind of answer if we all get invested one by one as soon as the organization has been established," Cherubim suggested.

'Did he expect this?'

"I think half the members should be the angels who invested in the new human race plan, and the other half will be the angels who are against it," he added.

'I think things are going a little too smoothly… Did this bastard prepare something already?'

"It'd be wise to find a way to defend yourself," he said.

'No… he expected it.'

This cunning bastard. He really did prepare something.

I felt a tingling sensation on the back of my head. I wasn't certain, but it felt like Cherubim was patting the back of my head.

However, I became certain of it when I saw him glaring at me. I thought he wasn't the type to do stupid things, but it didn't seem to be the case.

My mood kind of died when I thought about how Cherubim really thought that I was creating a trap for him. Obviously, he had no idea what kind of trap it was, but he knew that it existed—he believed that there was a spiderweb somewhere and that I was just waiting for him to get caught in the trap.

'He's aware.'

I couldn't help but think that perhaps the blue-haired angel knew me better than Thronus because he had always been suspicious of me.

'Can I take that as a threat? You're preparing a counterattack, right? You're going to use it against me.'

In other words, he had never believed in Seraphim's Judgment of Sin and the wings on my back. I knew what kind of angel he was now. He only believed in his own judgment, and he believed he was right no matter what.

"I think that's a great idea, Cherubim. I'll also do my best in the investigation, but I'm not sure if anything will be revealed…" Dominions said.

"Thanks for agreeing with me, Dominions," Cherubim said.

There was no way anyone could refuse to get investigated.

In other words, Ji-Hye noona had no choice.

"I also agree, Cherubim," Seraphim chimed in.

"Seraphim."

'The moment you deny it, you'll be labeled as a traitor.'

“I also agree, Cherubim,” I said.

I had to agree because he was right. This was a more reasonable decision than mine because I was trying to handle the situation by muddying the waters and taking advantage of their emotions.

‘Will this work against me?’

I didn’t leave any evidence, so it didn’t make sense for me to get labeled as a rat.

‘Does Cherubim have proof?’

It was unlikely. There was no way he could deduce to a T.

“Then let’s get started. Thronus will create the independent organization,” Cherubim instructed.

“Okay.”

“It’ll take at least three days even if we try to establish it as fast as possible, so I’d appreciate it if you conduct the investigation quickly and in a disciplined manner,” he requested.

“You’re right, Cherubim.”

Just like that, two days passed. It could be short for some and long for others, but we remained busy over the past two days. While I was working on the dummy world, someone spoke to me.

“He *has* been making preparations,” Lee Ji-Hye reported.

“Oh yeah?”

“Yeah. You can say that he was a hundred percent prepared for this. He was waiting for us to set the trap,” she answered.

“How was the investigation, noona?” I asked.

“I mean, there’s not much to say. I felt like I was walking on ice and the organization was established faster than we expected. If he hadn't prepared ahead of time, there’s

no way they could have established it so fast," she replied.

"How's Seraphim?" I asked.

"I think he's being suspicious of Cherubim, but he has always been that way. He never questions his abilities, and he thinks that he has already washed your sins away. By the way, have you made any preparations? Why are you so calm? You didn't seem all that busy with work lately, and all I saw was you working on the dummy world and fooling around.

"Are you done preparing everything? Is it okay to be this relaxed?" she questioned.

"The dummy world is fun," I told her.

"Cherubim is sharpening his weapon. He's a lot tougher than you think. I thought you were going to bait him in?" she asked.

"…"

"Is it not him?" she repeated.

"…"

"You've been too calm… Is it really not Cherubim?" she asked again.

"…"

"This is annoying. Say something so that I can help you. Is it Seraphim? Thronus? It's Cherubim, right? If we keep wasting time like this…"

"You never tell me those things either if you were in my shoes. Anyway, I'm actually relieved. If you haven't realized it yet, it means they'll never figure it out," I told her.

"Are you playing some kind of mind game here? Don't you think it's time that you tell me?" she questioned.

"I'm trying to bait Cherubim," I said.

"So?"

“There’s one more. Cherubim is actually not the main guy. There’s someone else,” I told her.

“…”

“…”

“Who is it?” she asked.

“How are the allied forces doing?” I asked.

“What’s with the… random… *Ah*…”

Dominions, I mean, Lee Ji-Hye’s jaw dropped as if she had realized something. She started talking cautiously, and she looked relieved that her question was finally answered.

“I understand what you're trying to do now, oppa,” she said.

“And that is?”

“…”

“…”

“Time.”

As expected, she was quick to catch on.

“Correct,” I replied with a smile.

CHAPTER 731
THE ARK (1)

Time was the problem.

“How much holy power do you think is consumed every hour?” I asked.

The holy power that the pigeons had gathered with one goal in mind was being thrown into the trash every second. A ton of holy power was necessary to maintain the dummy continent and even the war outside. Of course, a ton of holy power was also needed to shatter the existing system on the continent.

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that one-third of the holy power that they had gathered was being used for this plan, and it was being disposed of as we speak.

Lee Ji-Hye was smiling. I was worried she was going to react negatively to my plan, but I decided to just throw my worries away after seeing her smile.

‘I feel kind of relieved.’

“Mankind is slowly getting the upper hand in this war, and every single skirmish means spending holy power, so every skirmish can be considered as mankind's victory,” Lee Ji-Hye said.

“And Cherubim is a part of this,” I said.

“Seraphim is also a part of it, but supply and cost will be more problematic than the named beings being involved in this. You’re right. Even if Cherubim feels like he had gotten backstabbed, it shouldn’t be a problem. What’s the timeframe?” she asked.

“Well, if possible, I’d like to hold out for two weeks, but… they’d probably notice within a week. It might be more than that because he’s busy right now, but there’s no room to nitpick things. He’s probably enjoying this moment right now because he thinks he has turned the table around.

"He probably thinks that setting up a trap to counterattack me had worked, and if

he'd be able to get rid of me so long as he holds out a bit longer," I explained.

"That's true," she commented.

"You and I both know that when there's an injured prey, it's hard to show the prey mercy. If we make it seem like he's so close to catching us but fails to catch us in the end, I think he'll become even more frustrated. I think we can use that, but for a maximum of two months," I continued.

"Do you want me to find ways to make it longer?" she asked.

"It's fine, noona. There's no need for that. Cherubim might get suspicious of us if we make it too obvious. The current state is the most reasonable state. The dummy world is operating normally as usual, and we're getting holy power left and right.

"The allied forces are also moving based on the manual," I replied.

"That's the most important part, right?" she asked.

"Of course."

If the people outside were to find out what was going on here, mankind's profits would grow exponentially.

'We just need to avoid creating a really *threatening situation.'*

We just had to maintain a delicate balance, and the pigeons wouldn't run rampant. They also seemed to be understanding of us based on what the allied forces had shown so far. The allied forces seemed aware that we needed time, and it felt like they were helping us create a snowball by following the manual without overdoing it.

'This is how you execute things.'

The snowball method was really effective here. Jo Hye-Jin probably had a ton of work to do, and I was sure that they were done organizing the troops.

Since the frontline was pulled forward, I was sure she had many things to worry about.

She would have to create a temporary frontline as the troops moved forward, and she was probably trying to find a way to return our lovely regressor to his original self while keeping a close eye on him.

'That's right, Hye-Jin. Shit, time is on our side.'

"Should you start heading out?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"Yeah, I should," I answered.

"I don't think they prepared much, but still… don't let them bully you too much. You might get swallowed up while trying to bait them, and it's actually pretty dangerous, you know? One wrong move and you'll be labeled as a traitor, and you won't be able to get out of it," she warned.

'There's no way that would happen.'

It was certainty, not arrogance.

My thoughts didn't change as I walked away to faithfully participate in the investigation.

Seraphim was suspicious of Cherubim, and Cherubim was busy trying to bite the bait that I had thrown at him. It meant that he was too busy to put together the puzzle pieces that he had gathered so far. In addition, it hadn't been that long since the independent investigation organization was created.

'I can probably get three days' worth of time from their first investigation.'

A fight with Cherubim could easily last over a week. Moreover, he wouldn't be able to restrain me *that* easily. He was the one who suggested that we create an independent organization, so there was no way he could pressure me with his simple assumptions.

If I were to buy time using the administrative procedures, the snowball would grow bigger and bigger. Once it became big enough to destroy the temple, my small and sweet revenge would be complete.

'This hyung of yours will get revenge for you.'

I felt a strange presence when I reached my destination, and I was stupefied to see the crimson scenery before me.

“Prepare for battle. Prepare for battle!”

‘What battle?’

“The humans are here! Prepare for battle.”

‘What the hell are they talking about?’

Red warning lights filled the temple, signaling an emergency. I couldn’t figure out what was going on because it happened so suddenly. It was peaceful just a few moments ago, but now, everything had gone dark.

‘What the hell? Is this really happening?’

I suddenly recalled something…

‘The Kim Hyun-Sung Federation Break-Up Incident?’

“Impossible.”

It was impossible to break the temple's barrier and enter. If I were to exaggerate a bit, the barrier would make one feel as though they were being protected by the system.

Even if an external force somehow managed to break the barrier, entering the temple was…

‘Are they outside?’

Shit. I suddenly became anxious.

‘Are they really here? Do they think the pigeons are stupid? They’re just going to charge forward like this?’

Was Jo Hye-Jin out of her mind?

‘I'm carrying the team up here, so she was supposed to wait quietly down there. What

is she dissatisfied about? I didn't write that she might find unpleasant in the manual.'

She had to have made this decision on her own, as I had never told her to do something as unreasonable as this. Everything was working out without her getting involved. I was waiting while experiencing all sorts of troublesome ideas.

I worked so hard for this moment…

"Those… crazy bastards," I cursed.

If they couldn't immediately get inside, then there was only one thing those bastards would do.

"Are they thinking about shattering the barrier?" I questioned.

It'd still be an unfavorable fight, even if they were to fight defensively.

However, they were planning on conducting siege warfare using the troops that they had at the moment. If they were in their right mind, they wouldn't have done this.

I ran outside to take a look, and I saw a familiar-looking vehicle.

'The Ark.'

"Y-You crazy bastards."

'Nice Boat.'

"You fuckin' crazy bitches…"

The Ark had gotten even bigger than the last time I saw it, and I wasn't sure if their intention was to carry more people, but they had adjusted it to carry more people. I could see a pointy device mounted to the bow of the boat, and I instantly deduced what they were trying to do here.

Their plan had to have been to use Teleport to arrive in front of the temple and…

'Are they planning on ramming the temple?'

Just as I had feared, humanity's hope was charging at the temple.

“Y-You crazy fools!”

The urgent situation caused me to activate the Telescope. I was worried that someone was watching me, but I was more worried about that boat up there.

A part of the hull shattered, revealing the people inside the hull.

- Harder!

‘Damn it, Park Deok-Gu. You crazy pig.’

- Row harder!

The way the mages moved the ship using paddles created with magic was a sight to behold.

- You’re frustrating me! Give me the paddle. I told you many times that you have to row harder! You’re weak. So weak. Harder! Follow my chant. *Heave-ho! Heave-ho! Heave-ho!* Get the timing right, everyone! Push when I say *heave!* Pull when I say *ho! Heave-ho! Heave-ho!*

- Mister, the pigeons are approaching.

- We’ve already prepared the magic cannon.

- Ki-Mo bro, take care of that side for me.

- Open the cannons! Open the cannons! Fire at my signal! Load the cannons! Load them!

‘When did you guys install all those magic cannons? Shit, what have you guys been up to?’

- Heave-ho! Heave-ho!

- Fire!

Booooooooooom!!

- Fire!

Kabooooooooooooom!!

'Park-Ki-Ri, what's wrong with you guys?'

I was worried the siblings were acting on their own, but it didn't seem to be the case. If the three of them had decided to do this on their own, they wouldn't have gotten this far.

I looked deeper into the ship and finally saw the passengers.

'Damn it, Jo Hye-Jin. How can you do this to me?'

I saw Jo Hye-Jin looking outside with a determined face.

'Ha-Yan looks healthy, but what is that tree branch? Is that Sora?'

Jung Ha-Yan was mumbling something while holding a part of Han Sora's body.

'Why the hell are you there, damn it?'

Rafael was quietly stroking his holy sword.

'Hee-Ra noona is here because she just wants to fight, right?'

Cha Hee-Ra looked excited.

I saw people who weren't supposed to be here, and I was so shocked I couldn't even start describing each and every person there. Sun Hee-Young and Elena had come as well, so it seemed that Jo Hye-Jin had decided to bring everyone regardless of their roles.

Every single member of the Blue Guild's two parties was there, along with every single high-ranking adventurer of the continent.

'Did no one consider the possibility that these pigeons might shoot down the ship? And why did none of them oppose the plan?'

I had no idea if Jo Hye-Jin had gotten tricked into the Park-Ki-Ri sibling's suggestion or if Jo Hye-Jin was the one responsible for this, but this was still a bit too much.

I couldn’t believe what was happening.

Large explosions soon tore through the air, and the floating ship made a beeline for the temple. The Ark managed to survive the impact. Yeah, the Ark was pretty sturdy. We had even traveled to other dimensions with it, so I was sure it could withstand a few more bombs, but I didn't think it was strong enough to reach here.

If I were there with them, I wouldn’t have done something as reckless as this.

The Ark that charged into the temple’s first line of defense was confronted by the pigeons, who had gathered in groups. They were trying to stop the ship with everything they had, but the Ark started firing magic cannons.

- Fire! Fire! Fireee!!

‘Didn’t Ahn Ki-Mo say that his dream was to become the pirate king?’

“Shit, it must be nice to fulfill your dream,” I mumbled.

Booooooom!

The pigeons would get blown away every time a cannon was fired. Soon, a large shield enveloped the ark, and it was starting to pick up speed as it moved even faster to the temple.

- Forward! Forward! Harder! Harder! We’re crashing! Hold on!

- Everyone, get ready to go in! Let’s get ready! Prepare for battle! Prepare for battle! Brace for impact! We’re going to move soon! Follow the manual!

“You’re the one who should follow the manual,” I said.

- Hold on!!!

Kaboooooooooooooom!

A deafening explosion echoed, and the Ark crashed into the transparent barrier of the temple. I was hoping that they would just retreat because I was feeling kind of embarrassed by how the Ark seemed like it was an egg crashing into a rock.

However, my opinion changed rather quickly when the Ark created a crack in the shield.

Soon, the Ark shattered the shield and into the temple.

My ears started ringing, and the pig who had somehow landed the Ark alighted with a proud look.

I had no idea what to say.

“Shiiit… You bastards…”

CHAPTER 732
THE ARK (2)

Booooooooooooom!

Craaaaaaaaaack!

Kabooooooooooooom!!

- Move! Move!

- I want those with shields to get off first! Shields first!

- Victory!

- Move forward! Go forward!

- For victory!

- Get ready! Get ready! Channel the shield spells!

The humans inside the Ark poured out like a tide.

It was ridiculous how Park Deok-Gu led a group of muscular pigs hoisting shields bigger than themselves. They were doing a great job blocking the attacks that were falling on them to protect the troops that were pouring out of the Ark, so I could tell that they were well-trained, but what was the point of that?

'I mean, it's pretty cool.'

They looked like mobile mini castle walls. The mages weren't idle either. They cast shields and buffed the troops. It seemed that they used all buffs related to agility to support the tankers, who had grouped up in one area.

I was surprised by how fast they moved.

Obviously, the buffs weren't given by some ordinary priest.

'Is she behind the wall?'

I had to see who was behind the wall of shields.

'Elena.'

I used the Telescope and saw an emerald-haired elf.

Her lips were shaking, but she didn't stop casting her spells. I saw her moving while holding the arm of one of the support tanks. I could tell that she was scared, and it was understandable because she wasn't really used to large battles like this one.

The priests were in charge of the rear, and Elena was positioned all the way back, which made sense because her physique was too weak for her to act as a battle priest.

In addition, this was probably her first time becoming one of the troops on the frontline just behind the tanks. The wall of shields that the tanks had created seemed impenetrable, but I could see it breaking as the bombardment continued.

A shield disintegrated, and blood splattered all over, staining Elena's face crimson. The deceased tank was instantly replaced by one of the support tanks, and the elf princess somehow seemed indifferent despite witnessing someone's death.

- Shit! Shit!

- *Ahhhhhhhhhhhh!*

- Replace them! Next!

- Move the injured to the back! Move them fast! Hurry!

The good thing was that Jo Hye-Jin immediately went over to her.

- Miss Elena, are you okay?

- Y-Yes, I'm okay, Miss Jo Hye-Jin. It's just…

- I'll stay by your side until we arrive.

- No, there's no need to do that… It's not necessary.

- It's fine. I understand this situation is hard for you.

-…

-…

- Thank you.

Elena looked a lot more comfortable as she started walking while holding onto Jo Hye-Jin, but she was still afraid. Actually, it was more like she couldn't get a grip on herself. There were screams everywhere, and the air was filled with sweat and blood.

Elena also had to ignore the wounded, so I was sure this experience was brand-new for her, as she had always been watching battles from afar. The priests were standing just behind the tanks, even though there were supposed to be many layers of protection in front of them.

Elena bit her lip.

I couldn't say that she had realized something, but her face no longer looked as pallid as earlier If people outside the shield were watching, they'd probably think that light was flowing out from the inside. Elena started shining as she unleashed holy power close to her limits.

Jo Hye-Jin nodded with a determined look and immediately started walking.

She was waiting for the shield gate to open.

- I'm fine now.

- Please follow me, Miss Elena.

- Hang in there! Hang in there just a little longer! We're almost there. Hang on!

- Miss Elena! Hurry and follow me.

Yoo Ah-Young, the Blue Guild's support tank, offered her hand to the exhausted and panting Elena.

I saw the troops reorganizing their formation behind the wall.

The priests and mages helping the tanks move the shields were sent all the way back again, and the warriors started sharpening their weapons. Their task was to create space once the shield gate before them had opened.

The muscular pigs were buying as much time as possible, but the temple was still filled with screams.

- Hang in there!! Hold out!!! A little more! Just a little more!

- Open! Open it! Now! Open it now!!

- We're ready! Open it!

- Don't die! Hye-Jin noonim! Don't get hurt!

- Open it!

The shields that looked like they weren't going to budge opened slowly, and the troops who had been holding their breaths charged outside. Jo Hye-Jin came out first. Her long hair was tied neatly in a bun, and she thrust her spear toward the neck of a pigeon flying toward her.

'Why is she so fast? Shit, Hye-Jin. You really prepared for this moment. One thrust, one kill.'

It felt like I was watching Kim Hyun-Sung, but she seemed keener than Kim Hyun-Sung and was fighting ahead of the troops.

I was worried that she might get focused and get hurt, but I didn't need to worry.

She was so strong to the point that I questioned whether she was really wielding a spear. She stuck her spear to the ground and pivoted on it to kick the oncoming pigeons away.

Jo Hye-Jin was completely surrounded by pigeons, which meant that she had to fight

in a way that was completely unlike her fighting style, where she had to keep a certain distance away from her enemies.

Jo Hye-Jin let go of her spear and started serving knuckle sandwiches.

'Shit… she looks so cool.'

Those knuckle sandwiches looked extra delicious.

'What the? Where did she learn to fight like that?'

It wasn't my first time seeing that kind of fighting style. Xiaolin had a similar fighting style as Jo Hye-Jin. Of course, it was just similar; Jo Hye-Jin's current fighting style had a unique flavor to it, and her stance was pretty interesting as well.

'Does everyone who wields long weapons know how to use their fists?'

They probably learned to use their fists to prepare them for situations when they couldn't use their weapons freely. Her movements weren't as fancy as Xiaolin's, and if I were asked to describe it, I would say that it was a conventional but unique fighting style, as there weren't any unnecessary movements.

It was like she was moving only certain muscles that she had to move to perform a certain movement, and she had always been like that, even when she was wielding her spear.

Jo Hye-Jin broke the enemy's shin using her foot and shoved them away with her shoulder. After making enough space, she punched their abdomen, and the poor pigeon—who was just an extra to all this—was blasted away.

Jo Hye-Jin also responded quite well despite seeing a pigeon charging at her with a spear. She stretched out her long leg and wrapped it around her spear sticking out of the ground to spin in place and lash out with a kick.

She kicked the enemy's chin and stabbed their side with her elbow. Things were too chaotic for me to understand what I was watching right now. My jaw dropped because she was better at kicking than I thought.

"What the hell? Why do you look so cool, damn it?"

One would find it hard-pressed to witness such a fight, so I was shocked to see her display such cool movements similar to the movement of actors in movies—no, the scene before me was cooler than the fighting scenes in movies.

'Shit, I belong to you, noona.'

If it weren't for my current situation, I would have actually shouted at her.

'I wonder what she's going to do if I actually say that to her?'

The impressive sight was etched into my brain.

'Yeah, yeah, you guys are cool and amazing. But how are you going to fix this situation?'

They had succeeded in the landing operation.

'*You're really amazing, Deok-Gu. How did you manage to do that? You trained so hard that I can't find any flaws. So what's next?*'

I bit my lips.

I would have forced myself to understand them if this were just a skirmish. I had never approved of this operation, but I would have applauded them and said that it wasn't bad at all. The problem was that they were going all out.

They were pouring everything they had to attack the heart of the pigeons.

The powerful guild masters were all here, and it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that mankind had decided to roll the dice on this operation.

I would've felt relieved if some of the human shields were there, but they were just a small group of troops. To put it nicely, they had succeeded in the landing operation, but the troops outside had been basically isolated.

They couldn't expect reinforcements to come, and I couldn't help them at all.

'Damn it, Hye-Jin. You do have a plan, right?'

I would have felt better if Kim Hyun-Sung were there.

'Actually, I don't think I would've felt any better. Hye-Jin, you have a plan for later, right? Right?'

I had no idea whose idea this was, but I really wanted to know the next part of their plan.

'I'm sure they didn't come here just to get killed.'

They had to have a plan; no, even if they didn't have one, I had to make one.

'Confusion.'

Seraphim, Cherubim, and Thronus still hadn't arrived.

In other words, the tides of the battle would change completely once the Named pigeons were here.

'Damn it. Shit.'

There was no way they would just stand by and watch during a situation like this. I wasn't sure what they were doing, but they were probably on the way here.

I had to start moving.

'Where am I supposed to go, though?'

Ji-Hye noona would be fine on her own, right? She wouldn't act as Dominions, who had taken Lee Ji-Hye's soul, in front of Jo Hye-Jin during a situation like this, right?

Actually, she would do more than that.

I had to move while keeping my eyes on the battle.

"T-There you are!"

'Thronus.'

"Are you hurt… I'm glad you're safe. Actually, we don't have time for this. Right now, the humans…" Thronus said.

"…"

"The humans have invaded the temple. I think it's best if we move to a safe place," he suggested.

'Where is this safe place?'

"This is urgent. I must get going right now as well. The humans seem to be up to something. I'm sure they're trying to bring you back," Thronus continued.

'Why is this guy acting like we're close? You incompetent fool.'

"Hurry! We don't have time to stand around like this!" Thronus shouted.

Thronus looked like he was in a hurry, and I was sure he was in a hurry.

"Thronus?"

Of course, he didn't have time to stand around like this, as the humans had basically invaded their sanctuary. It was best that I go over and support them in the fight, so I was happy that Thronus had come to me first in a situation like this.

'Is Thronus not going to join them?'

The balance would get destroyed once he joined the battle. He was incompetent, but it was undeniable that he was strong enough to overpower Kim Hyun-Sung.

'Who's strong enough to fight this guy?'

I couldn't think of anyone off the top of my head.

To put it bluntly, someone on Rafael's level had to be capable of fighting Thronus, but the holy sword warrior who had cornered Kim Hyun-Sung wouldn't be able to handle him. Cha Hee-Ra would probably want to fight Cherubim, and there was a high chance that Jung Ha-Yan was given a special role.

As for the pig, his role had always been to take hits.

"Hurry. We must move fast!" Thronus urged.

'Is this the safe place he had mentioned?'

I did get the feeling that this place was safe, but the problem was that…

"It won't take long. I'll return as soon as things have been taken care of," Thronus said.

'What the hell? You mean you're leaving me here?'

He was trying to leave me here and join the battle.

"Just endure it a little longer," he added.

'Are you really abandoning me?'

"…"

"Goodbye."

"…"

"…"

"Don't leave," I said.

I had to grab his sleeve because the world out there had become a lawless world.

'You're going to protect me, right? Right? What if Cherubim comes and harasses me? There's no one I can trust in a chaotic situation like this. That bastard might actually try to kill me.'

CHAPTER 733
AN UNUSUAL THING (1)

‘Leave now, and you'll become a big piece of shit. You'll become a jerk. Don't you dare leave me alone!’

I had to look as scared as possible and act like this place wasn’t safe.

He was the only person I could trust at the moment. My words seemed to have swayed Thronus. I would say that he stopped moving momentarily. He seemed tense, and I was sure that he was hesitating.

‘What the hell? You’re not hesitating, are you? Are you?’

'Don't use your common sense, man. You know that things have been pretty strange recently. There are many pigeons who like me, but there are also pigeons out there who want to hurt me. Do you really think it makes sense for you to go out there now?

'Why do you think Cherubim is still missing?

'I’m sure that bastard is looking for me. I’m sure he’s gathering his energy to try to backstab me; he probably thinks that this is a good opportunity. Getting rid of the annoying guy during a chaotic situation is something everyone has thought of doing.

'It’s a lawless world out there, damn it. Common sense won’t work. Let's just say that Cherubim isn't as despicable as I thought, but there are elder pigeons who aren't exactly fond of me, you know? If they come here while you're out, I will have to say goodbye to my precious life and fly to heaven.'

“I’m scared. This place is dangerous,” I said.

‘I'm the safest staying next to you, damn it. Don’t talk to me about safety.’

“…”

“Please don’t leave me,” I begged.

“This place is safe. I already notified the others, and I’m sure they’ll protect you,” Thronus said.

“They’ll harm me, Thronus,” I told him.

“That’s not—”

“I’ve been threatened many times,” I interrupted him.

I actually haven’t. It would have been nice if someone threatened me, but no one was crazy enough to do that.

“That can’t be…” he mumbled.

“I just couldn’t tell you. You know very well that there are many angels here who don't really like me,” I continued.

‘You have nothing to say, right? Of course, you have nothing to say! You never supported me.’

“Please don’t go,” I begged and grabbed his sleeve again.

He seemed confused for a moment, but he bit his lips as if he made a decision.

After looking around, he walked inside cautiously.

‘Good thinking, man.’

I couldn’t help but think that I had succeeded in making him stay with me.

He slowly sat on the ground and awkwardly moved over to my side.

He seemed to be feeling awkward as well because he was being a bit hesitant, but he folded his wings and went quiet.

He also seemed anxious, and it was probably because he was sitting here with me when a battle was happening out there. The brave angel wanted to protect me, but he couldn’t stop thinking of his responsibilities.

“…”

‘Should I try?’

I was being fickle here, but…

‘Should I give it a shot?’

What would happen once this angel had put his burdens down? I wasn't sure if he could put his burdens down, but it didn't hurt to assume.

‘Not bad.’

Thronus was powerful, and he had proven that by overpowering Kim Hyun-Sung. He had even shown that he was strong enough to go up against Doom Hyun-Sung, and his character wasn’t that bad, either. When I recalled why the masked hero kept him by his side in his past life, I managed to figure out the answer to my question.

‘You never know what’s going to happen.’

With this angel on my side, the battle outside would go swimmingly. The problem was that it was unclear whether this guy could point his sword at Cherubim or Seraphim. It was unknown if he could show hostility toward the other pigeons.

Boom!

A powerful explosion echoed. It sounded muffled, as it was too far away, but the violent tremors scared the weak and powerless Lee Ki-Young.

“It’ll be fine. No need to be afraid,” Thronus said.

“But…”

“I’m going to check the situation outside…” he said.

“No, please don’t go,” I begged.

‘There’s nothing around here, man. I think someone is on their way, but it’s nothing you need to be worried about. Well, it’s more like you shouldn’t care.’

“…”

"…"

I decided to start creating a certain mood because it'd be awkward if the silence went on for too long. I slowly stopped trembling, and it was proof that the terrified Light Ki-Young was calming down.

Thronus seemed relieved, so I thought this was the perfect timing.

"…"

"Occasionally…" I paused.

"?"

"Occasionally, I recall a few things, but they're a bit blurry," I continued.

"Like what?" he asked.

"It's things that pop into my head whenever I hear certain noises. I don't know why, but unfamiliar scenes would pop into my head. I would then see a few blurry scenes; I would see myself in the middle of screams and explosions like outside," I said.

"…"

"I was smiling while wearing a mask covered in blood. The humans screamed, asking to spare them and to give them another chance. However, the humans exploded into pieces, and they flew all over the place like rags.

"I'm sure I did it. I was smiling in the middle of the ruins. I don't know why I was seeing things like that, but the person standing at the center was definitely… definitely me," I explained.

"That's…"

"I remember when I first met you, Thronus. I've been ignoring it up until now… and I tried my best not to remember it, but you seemed to know who I—"

"That's not who you are. I-It's a memory you can forget about. You don't need to worry about it. It's already… Yes… it's different from the past. You're different from the past," he interrupted.

“So *that* was…” I paused.

“…”

Thronus looked uncomfortable talking about it, and I understood why.

How could he talk about something like that?

‘Ah, that was you. That was you in your past life. You got brainwashed by bad men, but you were really amazing. You went around destroying things and killing people mercilessly. That’s not all. You even killed me. Well, it’s all because you got brainwashed, but it was all during your past life.

'Things were also pretty chaotic back then, so don’t feel guilty.’

I didn’t even want to know what kind of psychopath would say something like that. Who would be able to cure Light Ki-Young’s broken heart? That was probably why he was being cautious.

“I think I know a little bit about what the Judgment of Sin is and the sin that I committed. I was in denial, but that’s…” I paused.

“That wasn’t you!” Thronus shouted.

“…”

“That wasn’t you…” he repeated.

“That’s not all. From the images that popped into my head, I saw you as well, and it was a more comfortable memory,” I said.

“That’s…”

“We were looking at the night sky together,” I told him.

“T-That’s…”

“I don’t know exactly where that place was, but…”

‘You remember it too, right? We had a good time back then. You were really happy.’

“You said humans were the same as the stars. You said the way they shine is beautiful, and that’s why you love them. You even asked me why I chose you, and I said…” I stopped.

“It’s because I resemble humans,” the brave angel spoke as if he were possessed.

“I said you ponder and regret just like humans do. You worry and become deep in your thoughts over trivial things… I said you can shine brighter, become stronger, grow bigger, and go higher than the other angels. That was the reason why I chose you…” I added.

“Yes… you did say that,” he said.

“You said we should come back and see the stars in the night sky again,” I said.

“I did… say that,” he mumbled. Thronus had denied it, but now, he was saying that it all happened. I got slightly excited because of how fast his attitude changed. I glanced at him and saw that he looked pretty emotional. His eyes seemed like they were filled with tears.

“That conversation was etched into my heart,” I told him.

“Really?” he questioned.

“Of course, it’ll be etched into my heart along with the painful memories. It’s strange for me to talk about this during a situation like this, and even I think it’s kind of shocking, but…” I paused.

“…”

“I committed a sin,” I continued.

“…”

“I committed a sin to the humans that cannot be washed away. It wasn't salvation. It was an expression of anger and madness itself. As you said, they’re stars, and they have limitless potential. They’re stars that shine by themselves, but I stepped on those stars and destroyed them.

"The reason doesn’t matter; I still committed a sin. It might be because of that one

sentence that remains faintly in my memories, but I want them to live. It doesn't matter, even if they're ugly stars, dim stars, or stars that don't shine at all. I want them to live, and I want to be with them," I explained.

“Lee Ki-Young…” Thronus muttered.

“I want to be with them, and that’s why I don't want those stars to disappear. It hasn’t changed even now,” I continued.

“What do you mean?” he asked.

“I want to save my friends and family who chose to come here. That’s my atonement and role,” I replied.

“Why are you…”

‘It’s obvious.’

“I want you to be with me,” I told him.

“…”

“I want us to look up at the sky filled with stars again. Together,” I added.

The build-up was weak, but it wasn’t bad.

Actually, I believed our Thronus would do all the build-up on his own. Of course, the masked hero had built the foundation.

I was kind of nervous because this was basically Thronus’ last chance.

‘Don’t disappoint me.’

Even I thought this was unusual.

‘You shouldn’t disappoint me because forgiveness doesn’t fit with Light Ki-Young.’

I grabbed his sleeve again and met eyes with him.

I saw hesitation in his eyes, and then he avoided my gaze.

'Alright, fine. It was stupid of me to expect something from you.'

"I…" Thronus said.

'Fine, damn it.'

"I can't do that. It's because I have… a mission… and a calling. B-But I can find another way…" he stuttered.

'Talk all you want because I can't hear anything, damn it. Why would you find another way? I'm the one who is supposed to find another way. Ah, this is really annoying.'

"If you talk with the others, we might be able to find a way. I'm sure Cherubim will understand…"

"Hey, Thronus," I called out.

"*Uh…"*

"Look at me, you idiot," I said.

Boom!

The wall next to us was destroyed, and I saw a figure trying to stab me with its sword.

Of course, I wasn't surprised because I told them to do it.

However, Thronus was surprised.

The sudden turn of events made Thronus stand in front of me. If the figure had targeted Thronus, they wouldn't have been able to hit him, but they had decided to attack me.

The dazzling gray light made me shut my eyes, and when I opened my eyes again, I saw Thronus' face staring at me.

A gray sword had pierced his chest.

"Get off of me, you bastard," I cursed.

‘Oh, my dear, Rafael is here.’

I felt relieved when I saw Rafael. He had just saved me from this incompetent angel.

But before I walk over to Rafael, I should say something to this incompetent bastard, right?

“…”

“…”

“I think I know why I did not choose you in the end. I finally know why you were abandoned, Thronus.”

“A-Are you… okay?” Thronus asked.

“Fuckin’ idiot,” I said.

CHAPTER 734
AN UNUSUAL THING (2)

‘Our child is not skilled, but he’s strong.’

Rafael had just come back from the Jordan River Express, but he was strong.

He thrust his sword into Thronus' heart, and he was as reliable as Kim Hyun-Sung in his rookie days. He continued unleashing a gray light while spreading his wings. His gray light was fatal to the pigeons, as their source was completely opposite from each other.

It’d probably consume them from the inside like poison, and Thronus' distorted face proved that I was right.

“A-Are you—”

“Die,” I said, cutting him off.

“*Cough… cough…*”

Rafael pulled out his sword, and I noticed Thronus slowly falling apart. He stretched out his hand clumsily, but of course, I wasn’t going to grab it. Instead, I took a step back. As he fell to his side helplessly, I saw Rafael smiling brightly behind him.

“Hyung,” Rafael said.

‘Oh my. Our gray light warrior is here. You’re so trustworthy. This is what you should be doing.’

“Hyung,” he called out again.

Our holy sword warrior looked as if he was feeling a sense of accomplishment. He ran over here to prove himself, and he managed to do it. His hands were still shaking, which made it clear that adrenaline was still coursing through him. His face was filled with the conviction that he wanted to walk with the light.

This was the difference between the fallen Thronus and our Rafael.

Why wouldn't Rafael question it? He had concluded that Kim Hyun-Sung was evil, but he ended up getting beaten up until he fell into a coma.

Fortunately, he surpassed everything suspicions and came here.

I thought he finally knew what to do so that he wouldn't get abandoned.

He had gotten smart enough not to question things, not think too deeply, and simply follow the light with utmost faith without questioning the light itself. I didn't even need to list the difference between him and the gray pigeon.

'Yeah, you contributed a lot.'

Rafael had also healed the regressor's wounds.

'He has become really trustworthy.'

I was convinced once again that we would win so long as we stood our ground. I didn't think the day would come when I would be proud of him for not using the life-support system anymore. He seemed to have grown a lot. At one point, I didn't even want to see him, but now, I was all smiles staring at him.

'I told you this coin would go to the moon no matter what, noona.'

It was a good thing that I didn't sell it back then, and what I had done could be considered the result of good decision-making. Investment Genius Lee Ki-Young could see which coins would go to the moon or plummet with beast-like instincts.

Rafael's gray light seemed to have gotten even stronger, and I could tell that his stats had increased as well. There was nothing I could do about his battle experience, but Rafael was stronger than most people. Still…

'He's not strong enough to beat Thronus.'

Thronus was still gasping for air while lying on the ground.

I wasn't sure if he was spacing out or if he had no intention of blocking Rafael's attack in the first place, but in the end, he was dying. Of course, there was no need to

look at him because Rafael was more important than him.

First, I needed to show him that I was in disbelief. Acting as if what I was seeing right now was real rather than a dream was the most natural reaction. There had to be tears in my eyes, and making them roll down my face later was a good idea.

'Ah, I wonder if he heard what I said earlier. I think I cursed, too.'

There seemed to be a minor issue, but it wasn't a problem.

'People will only hear what they want to hear, after all.'

The idiot on the ground made me think that Rafael was kind of cute during our touching reunion.

"Rafael…" I mumbled.

"Yes."

"Rafael… Mr. Rafael?" I repeated.

"Yes."

"Mr. Rafael," I said again, calling out my younger brother's name.

"Yes."

Now that I thought about it, tears didn't really fit Light Ki-Young's confident image. It was hard to stop the tears that were already falling, but I tried my best to hold it in. He was weak, but he had a strong heart, which was what I liked the most about him.

"Thank you, Mr. Rafael. Y-You heard my voice," I stuttered.

"It was faint, but I continued listening to it. Goddess Benigoa was probably guiding me. I didn't think we'd meet like this, but… it took a long time for me to stand before you like this," Rafael said.

'Wow, you grew stronger, Rafael.'

"I think it took me a really long time. I'm really glad that I can contribute, even

though I'm weak."

"No, you came just in time, Mr. Rafael. You're not weak at all, as well. You're the chosen one, and it was bestowed upon you so that you can save the continent. I don't know what to say because it's been so long since we've seen each other… There are many things I really want to talk about with you," I said.

"Me, too, hyung. Are you feeling okay? How's your body? Are you hurt, or do you feel uncomfortable at all? Did these demons do something…" he questioned.

These villainous bastards really had to die?

"How should I… kill this demon?" he asked.

I liked how he allowed me to decide. Of course, Thronus had to die. If we let him live, things might become problematic later. He had to retire here, but he was pretty tenacious—no, the four of them had always been tenacious.

"…"

I didn't answer, but I nodded. The silent confirmation caused Rafael to raise his sword high.

"Over here! It's this place!"

"Lee Ki-Young is here!"

'Pigeon bastards… '

I didn't have to think, and I felt my body move at the same time I heard the loud noise. I couldn't react to it, but our holy warrior reacted to the enemy's attack. It felt like I was moving fast while being carried. I saw a white light pouring down on us, but the dazzling gray light blinded me, and I found myself in a different place.

"I'm sorry," Rafael said.

"…"

'Those bastards reacted fast. Shit, that Cherubim bastard. He had already dispatched them. Ah, we should have finished off Thronus.'

Rafael had decided that there was not enough time to kill Thronus, so it couldn't be helped, but I was sad. Thronus would become a really scary opponent the moment he got back up and aimed his sword at the humans once again.

'This is bad.'

Once they found and rescued Thronus, they'd know for sure that I had sided with the humans. Actually, there was a high chance that they were already doubting me. I was having many different thoughts as Rafael carried me away.

I was thinking frantically about the best way to go around this.

Rafael had managed to get deep inside the temple, so the battlefield had to have become quite expansive. I didn't need to use the Telescope to confirm it.

The landing operation was successful, after all.

Jo Hye-Jin had split the units and was using the temple as the battlefield.

She was probably after something. Of course, rescuing me was probably part of her plan, but I didn't think she invaded this place with the sole purpose of rescuing me. Since she was willing to take this big of a risk, they were probably hiding something from me.

"Where should we go? Why don't we join the main base? The path is blocked, but I think we should go to the Ark…" he suggested.

'Is returning straight to the ark the right thing to do?'

I had to choose carefully because there were still things I could do.

'Seraphim.'

I wonder if he had found out that I had pressed a certain button to change my thoughts when he had cast the Judgment of Sin upon me.

I was sure that he had heard it indirectly from somewhere.

Cherubim and Seraphim were walking on two different paths, and they were currently moving for their own goals. There was a high chance that Seraphim was

simply denying it, as acknowledging it meant denying his Judgment of Sin.

It didn't take long for me to decide.

"No, you should head back first, Mr. Rafael," I told him.

"What?"

"There's still something I must do. If you stay somewhere close, I'll send a signal right away," I instructed him.

I thought it was impossible, but it was about time I threw the dice.

Obviously, I wasn't thinking that I was going to win this game.

It was because…

'I have a debt to pay to Seraphim.'

"B-But…"

"It's a really important matter, and it's urgent as well," I said.

"…"

"I know it's dangerous, but I have to do this. Trust me. Nothing will happen," I reassured him.

"…"

"…"

Rafael couldn't possibly reject me, and he also had no time to think about my motives for staying here, as their situation outside wasn't exactly the best

He knew the pigeons were overpowering us, and he couldn't fight while carrying me, so he had been thinking about taking me to a safe place and then getting rid of the pursuers.

My suggestion came just in time, as I knew that he was about to suggest that he

become bait. Fortunately, we didn't have many choices, and I soon heard Rafael's voice.

"At least, let me take you to a safe place. Also… I'll be close, so you must send me a signal."

"Thank you. About the demons chasing us…"

"I'll try to stop them, hyung. Twenty minutes. I'll come find you in exactly twenty minutes," he said.

"If I don't fire a signal even after twenty minutes, you can come right away. You must," I instructed him.

'You have to come find me, okay? Don't abandon me.'

"Okay," Rafael said while looking somewhere else. He started moving right away after leaving me in a safe place; clearly, he had decided that the pursuers had to be defeated as soon as possible.

I was also running out of time. This was literally a race against time.

I had to move quickly before Seraphim heard about my betrayal.

'Noona, are you ready? We need to do it quickly. We don't have time.'

I needed my soulmate.

'Shit, Lee Ji-Hye. Where did she go? What the hell is she up to?'

I looked at places where she might be using the Telescope, but I didn't see her anywhere.

'Ah, shit. I really hope she's not acting like her soul was taken by Dominions.'

I continued looking around, and I finally saw Jo Hye-Jin and Dominions.

- What did you do to her?

- I just did what needed to be done.

- I asked what you did to her!

- And I gave you an answer. I just did what needed to be done.

'Ah, shit. Noona. I told you not to do that.'

- If you want to retrieve her soul, fight me. That's if you think you can defeat me.

'Stop acting like Dominions, who had taken Lee Ji-Hye's soul hostage. We're running out of time, damn it.'

- Let me introduce myself again. I'm Dominions, the Soul Stealer.

"*Ah*… stop acting like the actual soul stealer…!"

CHAPTER 735
VALUE (1)

'Did you really have to do that now? Now of all time?'

I felt bitter.

'She's doing this to fulfill her own desires. This isn't right.'

I couldn't help but laugh at the really shocking scene.

I recall Lee Ji-Hye telling me that she could do it and that she would really show me everything she had, but I never expected that she would show me all she had right now.

"Wow… this is really shocking…" I mumbled.

I was sure Jo Hye-Jin had many things to do right now.

'She has so many things she needs to take care of, and you're using this to stop her?'

I still didn't know why Jo Hye-Jin came here, but I was sure there was a great reason behind her decision to come all the way here. I was kind of suspicious, but after looking around the battlefield once more, I understood what was going on.

Park Deok-Gu and Jung Ha-Yan had no idea that I was here, and it wasn't just those two. It felt like most of them had no idea that I was here. It looked like they were moving according to the manual that they received ahead of time, and I became even more certain of it upon seeing that they weren't moving based on their emotions.

That wasn't all…

The troops didn't bother securing an escape route, so they definitely had other plans aside from rescuing me. They were actually spreading out in all directions, and they even split up the troops, waging guerilla warfare inside the temple.

'It's not a bad decision.'

They wouldn't be able to stop the pigeons' wings inside the temple. This place was the enemy's territory, but we had the advantage in battle. Their numbers were overwhelming, but we could still buy time.

The larger an army was, the more difficult it would be to move it. Basically, the troops here had no choice but to engage in guerilla warfare, which meant they would have no reinforcements once they were on the verge of defeat.

This was probably another reason why Jo Hye-Jin had split the troops. She obviously had a different goal. However, Dominions, the Soul Stealer, appeared out of nowhere and stopped Jo Hye-Jin, who was running around to fulfill her goal.

'Dominions, the Soul Stealer?'

Lee Ji-Hye's storytelling made me sigh. I had no idea where she got *Soul Stealer* from, but the name itself was pretty cheesy. Did she really need to use that name? Wouldn't Soul Collector be better? It was cliched, and I thought it was a bit too much here.

I was frowning, but Dominions was grinning in satisfaction.

'She does look kind of cool. It would've been nice if I gave myself a backstory like she did… I'm a better actor than her, so I can play the Soul Stealer role with confidence.'

I felt uncomfortable because it was like I was acknowledging that we had the same taste. I watched with the Telescope while questioning whether Jo Hye-Jin would fall for that, but regardless of my feelings, those two were already writing their own stories.

Jo Hye-Jin's desperate struggle to retrieve Lee Ji-Hye's soul from Dominions had started long ago.

- Dominions!

Jo Hye-Jin attacked with her spear while releasing a powerful shout. I had never seen her so determined to kill someone. I wondered how Lee Ji-Hye was going to get out of this one when she barely had any experience in fights.

However, I was surprised to see her maintaining a certain distance from Jo Hye-Jin.

She was pressuring Jo Hye-Jin using her curtain of light, and even I thought that she had excellent instincts for her experience.

'No, she's not the one fighting here.'

Was it Lonovera or Dominions? Regardless of their identity, Lee Ji-Hye was unleashing an exceedingly sharp light. The way she flew in the air while spreading light with a flick of her sleeve made it seem like someone else was controlling her body.

It was probably similar to when Belial helped me.

They exchanged a few moves, and the battle soon came to a lull.

Jo Hye-Jin was breathing heavily, and the Soul Stealer was looking down at her. Jo Hye-Jin was strong, but she wasn't on the same level as Kim Hyun-Sung, so she stood no chance against Lee Ji-Hye. I wasn't sure if she was feeling frustrated, but her face was filled with anger and only anger.

'I feel bad for my friend.'

The scene was breaking my heart.

- You…

-…

- You're an upright person.

- I will never forgive you. Never.

- I like that you have an unbending will. I don't really know you well, but I think I know what kind of person you are.

- I can never forgive you. Never.

- Basically, you're a human who deserves to live, so let me say this again politely. Please go back.

- What?

- Go back the way you came. If you do so, I'll forgive you for your rude behavior. I'll think of it as a mistake and move on. We need someone like you on the new continent that we'll inevitably manage. People like you will become peaceful, just, and upright denizens of the continent.

It was despicable how Lee Ji-Hye was slowly exaggerating things.

Obviously, Lee Ji-Hye knew that Jo Hye-Jin wasn't going back the way she came from.

- Unlike her.

Jo Hye-Jin's face was painted with rage again. She bit her lips as if there was something she wanted to say, and I knew she was going to quote a famous line.

-…

- They're someone who cherishes even the smallest creature.

'Who are you talking about?'

- They don't know how to wield a sword and avoid fights. The smallest conflicts have always made them feel uncomfortable, so they've always yielded and compromised. They act strong on the outside, but they're actually soft inside.

'They? Who are they? You're talking about me, right, Hye-Jin?'

- The smallest scratch is enough to make them cry in pain. They sacrificed themselves for others, and they endured a lot despite being weak.

'Who is it?'

- They do not fit this kind of battle.

'She fits the battlefield better than anyone I know. Wait, why has noona turned into this kind of person? How did she do it? She's pretty quick-witted.'

- No, you're wrong. That human was the most disgusting human I've ever met. They weren't worthy of living. To get straight to the point, they harmed the continent. They only hid it from you. She was a disgusting, wicked, and useless human.

'Ji-Hye noona, is that self-reflection?'

- Shut up.

-…

-…

-…

- There's no such thing as a useless human in the world.

-…

'Wow, that famous quote.'

Wow, Hye-Jin. Wow, wow. I had to carve this moment into the retina of my eyes. I got goosebumps all over. I never expected her to say a famous quote that was as good as her, *"Don't tarnish his pride"* quote.

'There's no such thing as a useless human in the world.'

The line sounded like it would appear in typical hero stories, and I never imagined I'd actually hear it here. What was even more chilling was that Jo Hye-Jin looked really serious. In other words, she had no doubts about the line she had just said.

However, there was one thing I didn't like about this. It was the fact that she didn't say that to me.

- Everyone has a dark side. Humans can't be good all the time. There was a time when I thought like you, but not now. Dominions, you can't define humans. No, no one can define a person. My belief has already been broken many times, and I'm not that upright. A-Actually, she's more upright than me.

-…

- She's not that complicated that… she needs to hear those insults from you when you don't know anything about humans.

- You don't have to understand humans to judge them. You can actually judge them a

little more objectively. You can take a step back and be neutral. This is her soul. This dull and dirty thing is the soul that you're looking for.

Soul, my ass. Dominions was holding a black orb that looked like it was made by Lonovera. However, Jo Hye-Jin bit her lips, seemingly thinking that the black orb was really Lee Ji-Hye's soul.

- Don't you think it's a really dirty soul?

- Don't insult her.

-…

- Don't insult her. We've simply been living in our own way; it doesn't mean that her life and thoughts were worthless.

'Ahh… '

- It's the same for everyone else.

'Ah, should I do Soul Collector Lee Ki-Young?'

- Everyone deserves to live. Human souls cannot be defined by such trivial things.

Jo Hye-Jin lifted her spear slowly and pointed it at Dominions. The way she breathed quietly with a determined look made her look so cool that I wanted to fall for her. The atmosphere seemed like she was suddenly experiencing an awakening, but she was just calming herself down.

I blinked, and a spear was already in front of Soul Stealer Dominions.

- I'll prove it.

Booooooooooooooom!

'Looks like they'll start fighting again.'

I wanted to continue watching, but I was convinced that I had already seen the important scenes.

‘Is it okay for me to just leave them alone like that?’

'Ji-Hye noona probably has something in mind, right?'

I was kind of out of it because of her betrayal, but I was sure there was a reason behind it. She might be able to help me find out why Jo Hye-Jin had decided to come here, among many other things.

If she just wanted to show her work to me, then it would be the worst reason, but Lee Ji-Hye had never been the type of person to do something without a good reason.

I was honestly sad that I wouldn’t get her help, but I couldn't just sit here and lampoon.

We couldn't afford a long, drawn-out battle, so I had to keep moving.

Jo Hye-Jin attacked with her spear while moving incessantly, while Dominions kept on dodging her attacks. The two continued fighting in the middle of the complex battlefield.

I started moving right away as well, and I searched through the Telescope, but I couldn’t see anything.

‘Where is he?’

I still couldn't find him.

I stopped for a moment and wondered, '*If I were him, where would I go?*'

It didn’t take long for me to find an answer.

‘The new human race plan.’

I was sure he went there to protect it.

There was a lot on the line, and he had invested a lot into the plan, so he had to protect it.

I was going to fly with my wings, but I thought it would be better to run there, so I started running. There were explosions everywhere. I didn't think the humans had

gotten this far yet, but the battle here had gotten quite intense.

'Park Deok-Gu?'

The Park-Ki-Ri siblings' troops were nearby.

With a bit more time, they'd probably reach this place.

- Move! Hurry!

It felt as if they were saying it to me, and I managed to take another step forward, all thanks to them.

I finally saw a place that was more familiar to me than my own home.

When I opened the large door, Seraphim turned around slowly to face me. The platinum-colored pigeon was glaring at me while tapping his thigh with his finger. He was also sitting on my chair.

The air in the room was tense and quiet. I thought perhaps there was something wrong, but I didn't show it because Rafael would arrive here in just twenty minutes. I just had to do the build-up for that moment.

"You were here, Seraphim," I said.

"…"

He looked a bit doubtful as he looked down at me quietly.

"That's right," Seraphim said.

CHAPTER 736
VALUE (2)

‘You’re not suspecting me, are you?’

It could just be me, or perhaps it was because of the strange atmosphere.

'Does he already know what happened?'

Even if that wasn't the case, there was a chance that Seraphim had realized something.

Of course, the chance wasn't high, as Seraphim couldn't doubt himself. My sins had already been washed clean, and I was his comrade working for the new human race plan with him.

Thronus was the first one to suggest my admission here, but his agreement was what got me a spot there.

‘We’re comrades, right?’

Regardless, I had to feign ignorance. There was no need for me to say anything or make any excuses. It was better to pretend like I didn’t know anything until he brought it up because that was the most natural thing to do.

“I knew you’d be here,” I said.

“…”

“I knew you would come here, Seraphim,” I repeated.

“…”

“It’s a relief. I’m really relieved. Anyway, we're running out of time,” I continued.

‘He is suspicious of me.’

His gaze toward me was strange, but I was on the right track.

The first thing I needed to do was check the dummy world to see if there were any issues, and then I would release a sigh of relief. There weren't any issues with it, and the tiny small world was operating like normal.

"I-I think it's best if we start moving," I suggested.

This place was in danger. What if someone came here and harmed the people living in this small world? We made this world together, and we needed to protect it for our new human race plan.

We were using a ton of holy power to maintain this small world, so I couldn't help but feel that someone might take advantage of the chaos to do something to this small world.

The atmosphere between the pigeons was becoming strange lately. Even if no one was after it, the temple itself was already a battlefield, so I couldn't just leave this here. Even if I decided not to take it away with me, I still had to do something about it.

I glanced over at Seraphim and saw him nodding slowly.

'Has he decided to overlook it, or has he decided to keep an eye on me?'

I found it hard to deduce, but it was probably the latter. He had already used the Judgment of Sin on me, and he had to have confirmed that I wasn't corrupted. He was still tapping his thigh, and it was a habit he would do unknowingly when he was deep in his thoughts. It looked as if he was considering many things, so I was kind of nervous.

Finally, Seraphim stood up, and I noticed him nodding lightly.

"So you also thought that you needed to come here first," Seraphim said.

'Shit, that's a relief.'

"Yes, that's true. Right now, protecting this small world is the only way to protect the continent. Actually, we're running out of time, Seraphim. Someone is after this place. I-I'm sure of it," I told him.

"…"

"There was an attack," I said.

"I know," he said.

"It's not the humans, Seraphim. I got attacked by angels," I informed him.

"What?" he asked.

"The masked angels," I replied.

"…"

"I was able to get away from that place thanks to Thronus saving me, but…" I paused.

"…"

"He might've gotten seriously hurt…" I continued.

I could've been in big trouble, so I was thankful for Thronus. Tears started welling in my eyes when I recalled how Thronus took an attack for my sake. I was worried about Thronus, who was probably dying at the moment.

"Thronus isn't that weak. I'm sure he's fine. More importantly, I want you to tell me the details. What exactly happened?" he asked.

Of course, I had to tell him the details.

"I was on my way to the council room to be questioned when I suddenly heard a loud noise. A tremor ran through the temple, and I started running mindlessly until I saw Thronus. He took me to a safe place, but the angels ambushed us.

"I couldn't do anything," I explained.

It wasn't lying, but there was only one singular angel rather than plural.

"They weren't after Thronus. I'm sure… they were after me," I added.

"…"

‘He’s not showing any reaction.’

I thought he would act kind of surprised or have doubts, but it didn’t seem to be the case. Actually… he looked like he was assessing the situation objectively. He was analyzing the current situation calmly instead of being emotional about it.

‘I wonder if he has many things to consider.’

I was sure he would have many things to consider If he had heard what happened from Cherubim. What if he had received a message saying that I had betrayed them and that Thronus got hurt? The situation would become a bit more complicated.

He could be trying to determine which side was lying. It was a very easy puzzle, but it was so easy that it was suspicious. Who was leading the pigeons against the new human race plan? The answer would be obvious so long as he believed my words.

Cherubim had to have already told Seraphim about Thronus' injuries, and he was most likely the culprit. Out of the Four Angels, there were two angels against this plan from the start, and if Thronus was out, then there was only one left.

‘Pretty simple, right? It’s too simple.’

'I'm sure you already know.'

It was true that Cherubim had agreed to the new human race plan at the last minute and had invested a ton of holy power, but he had always been dissatisfied with our work. He would often disturb us and refuse to cooperate.

Who was responsible for establishing the investigation organization? I was sure Seraphin knew that our plan had gotten delayed because of that, and who had been keeping you in check? It was all Cherubim.

'Don’t you think it’s strange? He suddenly sent a message saying I betrayed you guys. Think about it, Seraphim. Why would I betray you guys? I've already been forgiven for my sins, and I've been working hard for this plan.

'I care about the continent more than anyone. That guy is deceiving you.

‘That bastard lied to you. He was the one who sent a pigeon to stab Thronus.’

'I'm right, Seraphim. Don't fall for the bastard's lies.'

'He provoked the continent by suggesting that we kill the humans who were trying to work with us. You still can't tell what's going on here? He did all this. He caused all this chaos. He has been waiting for this. His real goal isn't the war. He's going to use the chaotic situation to ruin the new human race plan and kill me. That's his real plan.'

Rather than saying it was a simple puzzle, the story was flowing a little too naturally that it seemed unnatural. That was probably the reason why Seraphim couldn't be certain. It felt like the puzzle pieces were given to him in a set order rather than randomly.

'Was it too sudden? Was I being a little hasty?'

Would it have been better if I hadn't said anything? If I had a little more time, I would have manipulated those simple puzzle pieces a bit before presenting them to him. In addition to confirming his suspicions, I would have left baits here and there for him to find.

I could make it so that he would be able to accept the truth naturally and dramatically.

'Ah… shit. Maybe I shouldn't have rushed in.'

I started getting the feeling that I gave him the gift box a bit too soon. I had no idea what Seraphim was thinking right now, but he looked as if he was going to break my neck at any moment. There was hostility in his eyes, and his gaze was filled with a mixture of suspicion and doubt.

'Ah, maybe I should've just played along with Soul Stealer Ji-Hye noona. I shouldn't have come here. This is why people shouldn't stray from what they've been doing.'

I needed something that could turn the table. At this rate, his mind wouldn't change so easily, even if he nodded at my bullshit. I would still succeed, but the picture wouldn't be the perfect picture that I had been chasing after.

The sudden anxiety caused my fingers to move unknowingly, and my hand started tapping my thigh.

'Ah, shit… Should I leave now? Should I call for Rafael?'

My eyes inadvertently landed on Seraphim, and I noticed his peculiar movement. It wasn't anything special. He was just standing there with his arms crossed and his finger tapping his arm.

When I saw his moving finger, I knew I had to stop tapping my thigh. This wasn't the first time I felt this way, but there was something different this time. I had always thought we were pretty similar, but at this moment, his appearance overlapped mine.

'That's exactly what I look like.'

If I were to exaggerate a bit, it seemed like he was copying me.

If I were to be more accurate, he was copying the masked hero's habits and behavior.

'What the hell?'

That wasn't all…

The way he was sitting on the chair and the way he walked looked extremely similar to the masked hero. Just then, I realized something.

The one who copied tactical Kim Hyun-Sung was…

'Seraphim.'

I wasn't a hundred percent sure, but I felt like I was pretty close to the answer.

He was copying Lee Ki-Young of the first life. Why?

Was this the disgusting desire Cherubim had mentioned during that meeting?

I decided to assume that the platinum-colored pigeon adored and was jealous of the masked hero at the same time. Actually, if he really was copying Lee Ki-Young of the past life, then it had to be based on *those* emotions.

If the masked hero's actions and true character, like how he had a big heart for the continent, his talent, his personality, his ability to lead the angels despite being a human, and his open-mindedness had been the reason behind Seraphim's adoration…

Then, there was a high chance that Seraphim was still trying to become like the masked hero.

I suddenly recalled his first words to me when I had just entered the room earlier.

“So you also thought that you needed to come here first.”

Was I right?

I thought I finally knew the reason he had agreed to the new human race plan.

He had said something strange back then—something about having similar thoughts as me, but he only said that because I had told him that I came up with the idea myself, not because of the new human race plan.

He didn’t invest his holy power because he wanted to steal my achievements or claim credit. He just threw the dice because I had a similar thought as him.

Why?

Because he wanted to be like me…

So many things were falling into place that I couldn’t help but chuckle to myself.

I was starting to see myself in Seraphim.

The way he was thinking, coming up with several assumptions, placing his hand on his head, and even placing his finger on his lips. It was also amusing how he was keeping a familiar distance away from me.

If he were wearing a mask right now, he would have been stroking his mask.

‘Stupid bastard… you stupid bastard.’

Too many things had lined up that I couldn't call it a mere coincidence.

If he really was copying me, then I knew what I had to do. If he really was having the same thought as me, then I could just say that it was a misunderstanding and move on.

I didn’t even need to start from the beginning when talking to him about it, and perhaps…

“Seraphim.”

“…”

“It’s just a speculation, so you don’t have to think too deeply about it, but I’m worried… I know I shouldn’t be having these thoughts, but…” I paused.

“What is it?” Seraphim asked.

Perhaps all I needed to say was…

“It’s possible that Cheru…”

I saw him nodding quietly at me.

“As expected… you were thinking the same thing as me,” he said.

'Stupid bastard.'

My assumption was right. This pigeon was trying to think and act like the masked hero.

CHAPTER 737
VALUE (3)

I had no idea about the exact reason, but I was sure of it.

'How come the masked hero was so appealing to him?'

I already had an answer, though.

'Ha, it's because of my amazing charisma… I'm just built differently. Just standing still is enough for these bastards to get annoyed at me. Even if I try to live a normal life, I will always become someone's role model. Damn, what should I do? This is crazy. You're the best, Lee Ki-Young.'

It would actually be strange otherwise. I had always made bold decisions, and my actions always contained no hesitation, so it was only natural for him to idolize me. Out of the Four Angels, he would most likely be in the position of a leader—wait, no, but no one could argue that he would be at the center of a group.

Now that I thought about it, I suddenly felt like I understood how I inspired him in some way.

'Did it look like I possessed something you didn't?'

I didn't know what Seraphim was like in the past life, but he was probably completely different from now.

I was convinced that he had to have been pretty passive in his past life, as passive people usually longed for things that they didn't have. He probably had low self-esteem and was afraid of giving out orders. He was probably soft-hearted and was easily swayed.

The answer was pretty obvious, as he was imitating me even now. He was leaving the decision up to me. His sitting posture was upright, so he had to have been hunching in his previous life.

Seraphim's behavior overlapped with my behavior. However, he was just an empty shell deep inside, which explained why he wasn't questioning me at all.

'He's brainwashing himself.'

He didn't possess a trait that allowed him to do that, but he was probably talking to himself to make it seem like he was brainwashing himself. He was probably afraid of returning to his old self the moment he started questioning his own ability, which was why he had been brainwashing himself.

'Wow, the masked hero is pretty amazing. I feel bad because it feels like I'm receiving benefits without doing anything.'

Of course, there was a chance that this was one of the masked hero's plans for his second life. I wasn't sure whether this was intentional or not, but I had to take advantage of it.

"That's right. I don't want to think that, but… it's a possibility," I said.

"There are too many things that are bothering me to just call it a possibility. I think the humans have been provoked. We also need to consider the possibility of them colluding with the humans," Seraphim said.

'Right?'

"I knew something was off. The moment the organization was established, no, they might have plotted this before that," he continued.

'Yeah, you're right. This was all planned out from the start.'

"Cherubim still hasn't shown himself on the battlefield. What do you think this means?" he asked.

'He wasn't planning on fighting from the start. He's just a wicked man who doesn't care about the temple or his comrades and only cares about fulfilling his goal.'

"You should know," he added.

'Of course I know.'

Seraphim glanced at me as if asking me if that was what I was thinking.

It was like he was asking for my approval. Seraphim was right. He had figured it out—he had figured out that this was all Cherubim's fault. It was ridiculous how he continued acting like he was thinking, and I couldn't help but laugh after seeing this pigeon's true colors. Obviously, I didn't laugh out loud.

I looked at him seriously, and he looked at me with the same grim expression.

"I wonder if he had an argument with Thronus. Maybe that's the reason why he thought he needed to get rid of him first," Seraphim said.

"Thronus was against the new human race plan, but… he wouldn't have agreed to a crazy plan like this. I'm sure it was eating him away on the inside since he couldn't tell anyone about it," I told him.

"Thronus has always been like that. That fool," he commented.

'You're the fool.'

"That's why I came here. If Cherubim was really after the new human race plan, it's pretty obvious what his goal is," I said.

"It's either you or this small continent. Cherubim is like an open book. There are some parts that are bothering me a bit, but there's enough evidence to resolve my suspicion," he continued.

'You're right.'

"But Seraphim…" I paused.

"?"

"If Cherubim… really is behind all this… What are you going to do?" I asked.

"…"

"…"

"I never imagined Cherubim would do something so dramatic like this. Maybe the

cause lies elsewhere. He could've felt anxious about the new human race plan, or he could've gotten scared because the environment was changing too fast. It's hard to believe he'd do something like this just because he doesn't like me… We may have to find another reason," I explained.

As soon as I said that, Seraphim looked kind of surprised.

'Strange, right? It's not something I would say, don't you agree?'

Cornering Cherubim too much wasn't a good idea. Playing hard to get was extremely important when turning a person into a fool.

'The masked hero wouldn't have said something like that, right?'

Seraphim nodded slowly, probably because he realized it immediately. Lee Ki-Young of the past life was different from his present life. Our way of thinking was similar, but there was a difference in how we handled things. I had no idea why, but I saw him smiling.

'Is he enjoying this?'

He was probably thinking that he could fully replace the Lee Ki-Young of the first life. I was confident that he wouldn't find any other reason, as the masked hero wasn't the type to do something like that.

"Why must I find another reason?" Seraphim questioned.

"What?"

"It doesn't matter what Cherubim thinks or what caused him to do something like this. The important thing is that he has committed a sin. He's the one who should acknowledge that, not me. I don't compromise," he continued.

'Wow.'

"And I won't forgive him either," he added.

'You just copied and pasted the masked hero, didn't you?'

I didn't know what to say when he said a line that was so cringy it gave me second-

hand embarrassment. Yeah, the masked hero wasn't the type to compromise, and I thought it was a good mindset as well. He wouldn't forgive those who had committed a sin, and he would murder them all. He had never avoided an issue.

He had never thought of compromising, and he had always thought that his enemies should compromise for him. He simply killed evil bastards that he disliked.

'You're going to do the same, right? You can do it, right?'

"Yeah, I don't compromise," Seraphim repeated.

"…"

I looked at Seraphim as if he looked kind of cool.

I was sure he was enjoying it because his role model of the past life was looking at him with admiration. I probably wouldn't have a role model, but if I did, I would've danced with joy if they looked at me the same way. I wanted to tell him how big of a fool he was, but I couldn't stop him from feeling a sense of superiority and accomplishment.

'Are you happy that I'm looking at you this way?'

I was sure he broke out into goosebumps because the feathers on his wings stood up at once, and I was sure he didn't even notice it.

'Was I that *into myself when I was Doom Ki-Young? It'd be embarrassing if I were. I wasn't as bad as him, right?'*

Anyway, there was no way that I was as cringy as him. It seemed like Seraphim was prepared, and like he said, he wasn't going to compromise. I could see that he was determined to show Cherubim who the real boss was among the Four Angels.

Speaking of Cherubim, he should be here soon.

"What do you mean by you won't compromise…" I muttered.

"He must pay for his sins," Seraphim answered.

"…"

Seraphim was trying to prove to me just how amazing he really was.

'I believe in you, Seraphim.'

I was worried that he was having other thoughts, but it didn't seem to be the case.

The large door was flying open just as I thought about how it was time for Cherubim to appear. In other words, the villain appeared on the stage just in time. An angel with neatly tied blue hair.

Cherubim frowned upon entering the room.

'The actor is here. Great timing.'

He looked furious, and he spoke cautiously after looking around. Well, his lines were pretty obvious. The villain had no idea what was going on, so he was just talking bullshit.

"What do you think you're doing, Seraphim?" Cherubim said as soon as he walked in.

"…"

"…"

Cherubim realized that something was off.

"Didn't you get my message?" Cherubim asked.

"…"

"This rat has betrayed us again. Thronus is dying. This is all part of this wicked bastard's plan. The new human race plan never existed in the first place. It was a bunch of bullshit to divide us. Accepting that scum again was a mistake," Cherubim continued.

"…"

"He's evil. He's the human that needs to disappear and a being that must not exist in this world," he added.

'Hey, that's harsh.'

"Bastard," Cherubim cursed.

'You sound really angry.'

"Thronus trusted you," Cherubim said.

'Oh, really? Because I didn't trust him.'

"He worried about you until the end and trusted you," Cherubim continued.

'Is that right?'

"You're not even human," Cherubim added.

'I'm an angel, man. Also, you're not a human, either. Chatter away all you want, you demon. See if I care. Do you see the angel beside me? No matter what you say, he won't be swayed by it.'

It didn't take long for Cherubim to realize that something was strange. He looked at Seraphim once and then at me. He then looked at me and back at Seraphim. If Cherubim was aware of the platinum-colored pigeon's ugly desire, he'd soon realize what was going on.

"You…"

Seraphim spoke as if reacting to him.

"You're the traitor, Cherubim," Seraphim said.

"What?"

"Don't think we don't know about your plan," Seraphim continued.

"Y-You fool!" Cherubim shouted.

"You're the fool, Cherubim," he said.

"What the hell did that rat tell you, Seraphim?" he questioned.

“He hasn’t said anything to me. I just made my own judgment,” he replied.

‘Don’t remind him of his traumatic experience. He’ll get hurt if you say that.’

“I knew there was something strange going on with you, but I didn’t think you were this corrupted,” Cherubim said.

“I should be the one saying that, Cherubim,” Seraphim said.

“Do you plan on getting in my way?” Cherubim asked.

“I’d appreciate it if you think of it as me trying to stop your dirty plan."

“It’s your ugly desire that’s dirty."

“Shut up."

“I’m just stating the facts. You’ve been corrupted, Seraphim."

“I haven’t been corrupted."

“We’re not getting anywhere," Cherubim said with a shrug.

“That’s my line."

Things were going swimmingly. There was a moment of silence, and they both knew what was going to happen afterward. Cherubim made a sidelong glance at me before turning to look at Seraphim.

“Forgive me, Seraphim.”

“I wonder how much you’ve sinned. Are you not curious, Cherubim?” Seraphim asked.

‘Ah, shit. This is going to be fun.’

The two pigeons slowly took to the skies.

‘I don’t care who dies. Wait, no. I hope the blue-haired one dies.’

I couldn’t help but ridicule the two pigeons.

CHAPTER 738
VALUE (4)

The two didn't seem like they had known each other for a long time now by the way they glared at each other with such hostility.

'Man, where's the popcorn?'

Seraphim versus Cherubim…

The upcoming battle between the two would be the most epic battle I would witness.

The atmosphere was tense, and it had always been entertaining to see two people fighting each other despite standing on the same side. After all, they were bound to say hurtful words to each other. I remember having fun seeing the Blue Ranger and the Red Ranger fighting each other, and their fight was as epic as this one.

I was also personally interested in the outcome.

'I wonder who's the strongest between the four of them.'

When it came to just brute-force, Thronus was the strongest among the Four Angels.

However, it didn't seem to be the case overall.

'I think Cherubim is at the top when it comes to physical abilities. He was pretty tough when he was exchanging blows with Hee-Ra noona.'

However, physical abilities weren't enough to decide the outcome of a fight on such a level. Meanwhile, Seraphim's advantage was his authority. I wasn't sure just how effective his authority was on other angels, but it was better than nothing. As if answering my curiosity, Seraphim started cornering Cherubim, and the loud noises made me snap back to my senses.

'Hang in there, Seraphim. The future of the small world rests in your hands. You can't lose. We must secure the future with our hands.'

“Cherubim!” Seraphim shouted.

“You fool!” Cherubim yelled.

The way they fought each other reminded me of a battle scene in a movie.

They couldn't land any fatal hits on each other, but their figures were slowly getting riddled with wounds.

Boooom!

Cherubim crashed into a wall, and Seraphim crashed into another wall opposite of him.

The two stood up quickly, and a kaleidoscope of lights flashed before me.

The blue-colored angel swung his scythe, and the platinum-colored angel protected himself using a large veil made out of platinum light. This fight wasn’t going to end anytime soon, as the two knew very well what their opponent was capable of doing.

“You must break out of it, Seraphim. Do you still not realize that you’ve been possessed by a ghost?” Cherubim questioned.

“I told you to shut up, Cherubim,” Seraphim said.

“Remember your true self. This isn’t your true self. No one forced you to change, Seraphim,” Cherubim said.

“You’re talking nonsense,” Seraphim retorted.

“You must break out of it. You’re not the only one. We must break out of it… so that we can move forward. You must free yourself from that ghost,” Cherubim insisted.

“This is who I am, Cherubim. You’re the one that needs to break out of it. You must break out of that narrow-minded thinking of yours. We can go to a higher place,” Seraphim replied.

“I’m not narrow-minded. I just wanted to protect everyone."

“You’re corrupted, Cherubim. You’ll become even more corrupted if you don’t

change, and you'll always be in the same position. I reckon that you feel comfortable with that comfort zone of yours, and you no longer want to pursue change, but I am not like you.

"I do want to take risks, and it's all for the sake of going to a higher place," Seraphim explained.

"…"

"You're not doing anything because you chose not to change. Actually, you did change a bit since you managed to execute a crazy plan like this," Seraphim added.

"I told you that I wasn't the one who had called the humans here. You're being tricked, Seraphim," Cherubim said.

"No one can trick me, Cherubim."

"You're crazy. Haven't you heard that line before?"

"…"

"You're losing yourself, Seraphim." Cherubim pointed out.

"I haven't lost myself. I just found myself—my true self. This is who I am."

"That's not your true self."

"No, this *is* my true self."

"You're just imitating *him*." Cherubim pointed out.

'Hey, you're attacking his sensitive spot.'

"Stop the nonsense," Seraphim said.

"This isn't who you are, Seraphim. You're just imitating his behavior, the way he talks, and even the way he thinks," Cherubim replied.

"Your nonsense isn't even worthy of a response."

“Think about who you are, Seraphim. Think about just what kind of an individual you were back then. Is this who you really are? I understand that you want to become like *him*, but that’s not who you really are."

“Shut up.”

“Do you want to be like him?” Cherubim asked.

“Shut up!” Seraphim shouted.

'Stop embarrassing him. You shouldn’t say things like that to his face.'

It hadn't even been that long since I stared at Seraphim with a face full of admiration, but Cherubim was already exposing him. I was sure that Seraphim was both shocked and embarrassed.

The way Seraphim glared at Cherubim made it clear that he felt humiliated. Seraphim actually looked embarrassed. It hadn't even been that long since he looked so excited to the point that he had spread his wings proudly, but now, his face was flushed red.

‘I would be embarrassed as well if I were in his shoes.'

I was certain that it wouldn’t take long for him to turn that embarrassment and humiliation into anger. As expected, he got ready to channel his anger. Seraphim held up his sword again, and Cherubim provoked him again while looking at him.

“Why are you copying that human…”

“Shut uuuup!!!” Seraphim roared.

Booooooooooooom!!

Cherubim was blasted away, and my heart broke seeing Seraphim so desperate to make sure that Cherubim would stop talking.

‘Looks like he really is embarrassed.’

At first, they were fighting for their beliefs, but now, they were fighting with their emotions. Cherubim probably had no choice in the matter. If Seraphim were going to

fight with his emotions, he would have to do the same.

Honestly, Cherubim wasn't at fault, so I was sure he was a bit surprised. Pointing out his friend's mistake wasn't a mistake. From the blue-haired angel's point of view, it was probably the right thing to do, so I was sure he was disappointed to see that Seraphim was angry at him when he was just trying to help Seraphim.

In a nutshell, this was all Seraphim's fault.

"Shut up! Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!!" Seraphim shouted.

"You're the one who should shut up, Seraphim! How long are you going to act like a child? Open your eyes and face the reality! Reflect on how you've been acting so far!" Cherubim yelled.

"Shut up, you traitor!" Seraphim roared once again.

'Ah, he's getting really emotional. He even called Cherubim a traitor.'

"Y-You dirty traitor! D-do you really think that I'm going to listen to you when you're the one who brought the humans here? That traitor is lying! Don't listen to him, Lee Ki-Young!" Seraphim shouted at me.

'The way you're finding excuses actually makes you look pathetic, man.''

"You're not Lee Ki-Young, Seraphim!" Cherubim yelled.

'Ah… he finally said it. I'm sure that's going to do a lot of damage. You're really trying to provoke him. It's okay to point out his mistakes, but I think you used the wrong method and the wrong time to do it, Cherubim.'

"Shut uuuuup!!!" Seraphim roared furiously.

Boooooooooooooom!

'Ah, the dummy world might get destroyed, you bastards.'

"D-D-D-Don't listen to the traitor's words, Lee Ki-Young! Actually, just get out of here. I'll make you a path," Seraphim said.

The way he spoke in a hurry made it clear that he was nervous about the idea of me staying here. The timing was great, as I was worried that Rafael was coming. Of course, I was also worried about getting caught up in their fight.

It looked like Seraphim was winning, but things would become awkward if Cherubim somehow ended up winning the fight.

“O-Okay,” I answered.

“Don't be afraid and go!” Seraphim shouted.

‘Wow, now you’re trying to act cool?’

Seraphim's face was riddled with embarrassment rather than the determination to protect me. He was scared that I would learn of his weakness. The slow-witted Cherubim stared deeply at Seraphim.

Meanwhile, I finally understood why Lee Ki-Young of the first life managed to control them so easily. Basically, these pigeons were bad at communicating, which was their biggest flaw.

They had been together for a long time, but they still couldn't quite communicate with each other.

Cherubim had never told Seraphim his concerns, despite the fact that it was eating away at him, while Thronus had been blaming himself for falling behind the other angels.

I started questioning whether Seraphim was even capable of having a normal conversation. I had a lot to say about Dominions, but I’d rather not say it.

I wasn’t sure if they had always been like this or if they became lunatics after the masked hero appeared, but…

‘The reason behind their mental illness isn't my concern.’

All I cared about was profit…

I started running away because Seraphim told me that he would make a path for me.

I grabbed the vessel holding the data of the small world and ran away.

“Fly!” Seraphim shouted.

‘I want to fly too, but I can’t do that, damn it. My wings will get tangled if I try to fly in a panic. I’ll just end up with my face on the floor if I were to do that.’

However, when I saw Cherubim coming toward me with a grim look, I got the feeling that I needed to fly. Crashing to the ground because my wings got tangled looked better than crashing to the ground because I tripped over my own feet.

I flapped my wings and saw Cherubim swinging his scythe.

It seemed like he had put all his holy power into his attack, and he clearly wanted to slice my head off in one powerful swing.

‘Ack, shit.’

Seraphim did block his attack, but…

‘Shit, I shouldn’t have tried to fly. My wings really got tangled.’

I ended up rolling on the ground, and it felt like something had fallen out of my hands, but it wasn’t as important as my life. I placed my hand on the ground and stood up before running away desperately.

Booooooooooooooom!

“Don’t get in my way, Seraphim! Right now, you’re—”

“Shut up, Cherubim!”

I ran with all my might and eventually saw a door.

I opened it, and a massive hallway appeared before me.

Before I could get through the door, a powerful radiant light swept past me.

‘Did I almost die just now?’

- Die! You dirty traitor!

- Open your eyes, Seraphim! I’m not the traitor!

I used the Telescope and saw the two pigeons fighting each other.

How far was I from them?

Just as I started thinking about it, I felt a presence behind a nearby wall.

‘Is it my younger brother, Rafael?’

“Over here! This way.”

However, the voice didn't belong to Rafael. I was worried that the voice belonged to the pigeon, but the voice sounded a bit too familiar to me for it to be from a pigeon.

As expected, I heard the joyful barks of a dog.

“*Woof!*”

“There aren’t any enemies around, but I think we're getting close! H-Hurry! A little more. Just a little more!”

I had already seen him through the Telescope, but I still had high expectations of him.

‘He must’ve been missing me.’

It had been a while since I thought of him, but my heart started racing at the idea that I would soon see him again.

‘I don’t understand.’

I didn’t want to acknowledge it, but I had grown fond of him.

When I turned the next corner, I immediately saw a familiar face.

“*Huh?*”

“Y-You crazy pig!” I couldn't help but shout.

“Hyung-nim?” Park Deok-Gu said.

“You pig! Shit! It’s you! *Haha*!” I shouted while smiling at him.

I threw myself at him, and the surprised pig caught me in mid-air.

CHAPTER 739
VALUE (5)

- Are you sure about this?

'It'll be fine.'

- "*I made the right choice. It'll be fine. What can I do?*"

Yeah, keep telling yourself that.

'…'

- Just keep telling yourself that you made the best choice by letting me handle it. Isn't that the reason you decided to cooperate with me?

'That's true.'

- That's good enough.

'But… '

- But? Do you still need another reason? The reason you lost isn't because my power is lacking but because of your incompetence. I had bestowed upon you my powers, but you still couldn't do anything. Your incompetence led to this situation. Am I wrong?

'…'

- I'm asking if I'm wrong.

I[1] didn't think she was wrong, as I knew just how strong the power she had bestowed upon me. If I hadn't accepted her power, I wouldn't have made it this far. I wouldn't have been able to fight the angels, and there was no way I could have fought toe-to-toe against Thronus.

- You’re weak.

I knew I was weak. If I were strong, I wouldn’t have accepted her powers.

- If I were to describe humans like you with one word, it would be the word *failure.*

I couldn’t deny it because I was basically a failure.

I had ended up losing my precious family, and I was a failure in this life as well, not just in my first life—when I lost my precious comrades. I tried to become stronger, but I failed. I thought I could do it, but I couldn’t do it.

I wanted to stand up, but I fell to the ground.

I couldn’t save my precious comrades in this life either. I couldn’t reach my hand out to the one who had pulled me out of the abyss. I even hurt him. I wanted to go about this life comfortably, and I felt relieved when he offered to help me carry some of my burdens. It wasn't like I didn’t have any worries, but I had never questioned whether he could carry the burden I gave him.

However, I had decided to ignore it.

At the time, I didn’t think much of it, but I was sure I ignored it because I was happy and selfish. I was relieved to know that someone understood me, my past, and my present.

It was no different from a drug. I knew he was struggling, but I had ignored the signals that he was sending toward me.

Perhaps I had burdened him; perhaps I had made him feel anxious, and perhaps I had made his life harder.

It wasn't like I was unfamiliar with his personality, and I knew how he was going to act if I gave him some of my burdens. I was the reason he lost his memories, why he was dying, and why he was in danger. I got him involved in all this.

I-It was me. I had made a huge mistake by asking him to join me.

I shouldn’t have asked him to join me…

I should have ignored him in the tutorial dungeon…

- If you can go back in time, do you really think that ignoring him would have been a better idea?

'…'

- *Ah,* right. I shouldn't have asked. You're nothing but a piece of shit who doesn't have the courage to become a regressor again. You're probably thinking that you've changed a bit compared to that time, but that's not the case at all. The essence of a human being will never change. You got scared and ran away in the tutorial dungeon, Kim Hyun-Sung. That's your ugly self. You're going to keep running because you know that's the most convenient thing to do.

'…'

- You know very well that the method won't be as painful as the other methods. I'm not criticizing you for making the right choice. You simply made a reasonable decision, after all. The problem is that there's a very ugly and obnoxious emotion behind that reasonable decision. You understand what I'm saying, right?

'…'

- You're going to keep running forever and forever in a mean, dirty, and disgusting way.

'…'

- But don't worry too much. No matter how obnoxious you are, at least I acknowledge you. I like that dirty side of you. I like that you're a two-faced bastard.

'…'

- Go back and see. This time, it'll actually be over.

'…'

The scenery before me peeled away, and I felt myself rejecting it briefly. It was a natural reaction because the sight I was seeing right now was all made up. I had experienced this once in my subconscious, and I knew that I needed to escape from

this place.

However, I couldn’t help but smile at the sight. I knew all of this was a lie, but when I saw the sunset shining down on them, my will to reject the fake scenery before me disappeared in an instant.

- You’re already aware of the fact that you’re useless. You’re the example of a failed human being. You’re bound to mess things up, and you're bound to inflict pain on those around you. You were born that way, after all.

‘…’

- I’m telling you that sometimes—not doing anything is more helpful than doing something.

Perhaps that was true…

- I’m right.

Yeah, she was right.

“What are you looking at, Guild Master?”

Everything would be over once I woke up. I was a failed human being, anyway.

I knew I wasn't supposed to say anything, but my mouth was moving on its own. I kept on nodding toward the whispers, and I felt myself sinking deeper and deeper into the abyss.

“I’m…” I paused.

“Yes?”

“I’m not a guild master here. You can just call me by my name, Miss Hye-Jin,” I said.

“*Ah*, that’s true. We are on Earth, after all. Now that I think about it, it's kind of fun to call you 'Guild Master' here. Still, I'm a bit embarrassed at the idea of someone else hearing me calling you that," Jo Hye-Jin said.

“They’ll just think that we met in some kind of online game club. By the way… who

are we waiting for?" I asked.

"Well, hyung-nim said he was going to be a bit late. He said he's been busy recently, but he really must be busy these days. I think he barely managed to make time for this meeting. He really is amazing," Park Deok-Gu answered.

"He's always been amazing," Sun Hee-Young commented.

"I know that, Hee-Young noonim. I know that he's always been amazing; I just wanted to say that he's *really* amazing. As soon as we returned to Earth, he suddenly started talking about becoming a lawyer, and he actually became one.

"It hasn't even been that long since he got hired by a law firm, but he already got promoted. What is he if not amazing?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

I agreed with Park Deok-Gu.

"At this rate, I think it's just a matter of time before he gets involved in politics. He might become a member of Congress in ten—no, maybe twenty years. It'd be awesome if he somehow becomes the president," Park Deok-Gu continued.

"I don't really think that will happen, but… it does fit him," Sun Hee-Young said.

"It's unfortunate that things haven't been going well between him and Ha-Yan noonim since he's been so busy, but… their relationship isn't your ordinary relationship.

"We'll probably hear news of them getting married in a few years. Wouldn't you know something about that, Sora? The two of them…" Park Deok-Gu trailed off.

"Miss Jung Ha-Yan is… d-doing well right now. She's been eating well, too," Han Sora answered.

"That's a relief… By the way, aren't you working with hyung-nim… as the law firm's secretary or something?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"I am, and I've been doing well thanks to him. Except that he's too busy… I was supposed to help him because he was busy today as well, but… he was being considerate of me and told me I could head out first," Han Sora replied.

“About that Chinese lawyer…” Park Deok-Gu mentioned.

“I can’t tell you the details, but… he’s in charge of that case, and that’s why he’s been really busy,” Han Sora replied.

I looked around slowly and saw familiar faces around me. They were the guild members and the comrades I had spent time with on the continent. It had been a while since we had grouped up like this, and a sense of satisfaction filled me up at the sight.

I knew this would never happen, but I couldn’t stop smiling. I knew we couldn’t return to Earth, but this sight wasn’t so bad. Once everything was over, I was sure we’d meet often like this.

“Hyung-nim isn’t the only one who's amazing. Hye-Jin noonim is amazing as well. She passed her test, and all that’s left for her is becoming a prosecutor,” Park Deok-Gu said.

“This is… only the beginning for me. I’m really lagging behind everyone else,” Jo Hye-Jin said.

“I had no idea what to do when we first returned to Earth, but it's great to see that everyone has adapted pretty well. Ye-Ri is attending college, and Mr. Ahn Ki-Mo is seeing great success as an actor. I heard his movie is premiering soon. I think it’s called *King of Cars Ahn Bok-Dong* or something.

"Hee-Young noonim is busy with volunteer work here and there, while Miss Elena became a live streamer for some reason…” Park Deok-Gu continued.

"She has 4.5 million subscribers," Kim Ye-Ri chimed in with a smile. "She’s even famous overseas.”

“Is she really that famous, Miss Kim Ye-Ri?” Yoo Ah-Young asked.

“Yeah, she’s really famous. She’s probably more famous than most celebrities. The video of her eating hell chicken flavored ramen[2] even has twenty-five million views… Look,” Kim Ye-Ri replied.

“That’s amazing. I was worried whether she’d be able to adapt well since she came from such an unusual place, but… she seems to be adapting better than me,” Yoo Ah-

Young said.

“I heard you've been doing pretty well working for a workshop, Ah-Young. What’s there to worry about? I’m more worried about our guild master. Have you been studying hard, Hyun-Sung, bro?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

“I've been studying, Mr. Deok-Gu. I honestly don’t know what I’m doing, but… I'm doing my best,” I replied.

“I thought Hyun-Sung bro would be the first one to settle down, so it’s really surprising…” Park Deok-Gu remarked.

“Yeah, it’s taking me some time to settle down since I have yet to fully adapt to my life here on Earth. Anyway, I'm happy to know that you guys are doing great,” I said.

There was a low chance that I would fully adapt to life on Earth, but I was sure that everyone would lead happy lives once we were truly back on Earth. By then, I was sure they would be as happy as they were right now.

“I’m sure you’ll adapt soon, Hyun-Sung bro. Actually, hyung-nim is really worried about you,” Park Deok-Gu said.

“Really?” I asked.

“I didn’t hear the details, but I heard he's worried about you. *Ah*, there he is. You should ask him yourself,” he suggested.

I turned and saw two people walking toward us while smiling.

“Over here! Hyung-nim! Noonim!” Park Deok-Gu called out.

“Deok-Gu,” Lee Ki-Young said.

“It’s been a while, Sub Guild Master,” Jo Hye-Jin greeted.

“It’s been a while, everyone,” he said.

“I-I-It’s been a while, everyone…” Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

“It’s been a while, Mr. Hyun-Sung,” Lee Ki-Young greeted.

“It has, Mr. Ki-Young,” I said.

“I feel bad because it feels like it’s really been a long time,” Lee Ki-Young added.

“It’s fine. I know you’ve been busy. I didn’t reply to your messages because I was afraid of bothering you. Actually, I was worried… that you’re pushing yourself to be here,” I told Lee Ki-Young.

“It’s fine, Mr. Hyun-Sung. My life on Earth is important, but it’s not as important as the memories we made on the continent. If you don’t mind, I’d love to see you often. I think I’ve been neglecting you, even though we live not too far away from each other."

“That’s…” I paused.

“I’ll think of that as you agreeing to my suggestion,” Lee Ki-Young said.

“No, it’s…”

“I'll have some free time after this case is over, so it’s really okay. *Ah!* I’m sorry for making you stand. Let’s sit, Ha-Yan,” he said.

“…”

“Have you been… doing well, Mr. Hyun-Sung?” he asked.

He had his usual smile.

“Yes… I…”

“Have you been doing well?” Lee Ki-Young asked again.

He no longer looked like he was worried about anything.

“I…”

“Have you… been doing well?” Lee Ki-Young repeated.

“I’ve been…”

“Yes?”

“I haven’t been… doing well, actually,” I replied.

---

1. Kim Hyun-Sung’s POV ☜

2. the Korean fire noodle challenge. Fair warning for everyone, but it's really spicy! ☜

CHAPTER 740
VALUE (6)

I[1] noticed Lee Ki-Young's smile slowly turning into a frown, and the way he was tapping the table with his finger caught my attention. He was obviously worried about me. I was supposed to tell him that I was fine, but I had already told him that I wasn't actually fine.

As I said, I didn't feel like I was doing well.

'I feel so happy, so how come I feel like I wasn't doing well?'

There were many times when I felt like I was sinking deeper into a quagmire, and I had been spending most of my time these days feeling like that. It felt like I was alone in an empty space. I felt out of breath, nauseous, and dizzy.

I constantly felt like I was falling into a deep sleep, but I couldn't feel those here.

If I were asked how I was feeling, I'd say I was happy right now. I didn't need to criticize myself or take responsibility for anything here. I didn't need to wield a sword or kill people. I was with people I cared about, and seeing them successful made me smile.

However, I still wasn't okay, even inside the utopia I had been dreaming about.

A-A-About what I said…" I stuttered.

"Are you okay, Guild Master?" Jo Hye-Jin asked.

"I'm fine, Miss Hye-Jin," I replied.

"Bro, you okay? You don't look so good," Park Deok-Gu asked.

"Yes… I'm… fine," I mumbled.

"Are you okay? You're turning pale…" Kim Ye-Ri said.

“Yeah, I’m… fine, Ye-Ri,” I said.

Perhaps this was all because I still had regrets.

If it wasn't that, then it could be because I was feeling guilty about running away.

‘But… ’

I had definitely made a reasonable decision, and the man in front of me might agree with my decision because Lee Ki-Young had always been a practical man. He knew better than anyone that I was useless right now.

‘I’m sure that’s what he's thinking.’

He was better at taking care of things than me. I was incompetent, after all.

She was right when she said that I was a failed human being, and the word *failure* was the right word to describe me and the life I had led so far. I had gotten a second chance, but I was still a failure, as I hadn't been able to protect my comrades.

The situation would only become worse if I took charge.

As always, I would just fail and lose someone again.

“I-It was nothing, so please don’t worry,” I said.

“…”

“Really.”

“…”

“…”

“Let’s talk for a moment,” Lee Ki-Young suggested.

“What?”

“I think it would be best if you and I talk,” Lee Ki-Young said.

“But…”

“It won’t take that long, and… the others will understand,” he added.

I looked around and saw the others nodding in response.

“No, there’s no need for that. I said it without thinking… We decided to meet up today, and I know you’re busy,” I told him.

“I suggested it because I want to do it. Let’s go outside,” Lee Ki-Young said.

Lee Ki-Young got up first, and I got up awkwardly to walk over toward him.

The scenery here was different from the scenery on the continent.

There were neon signs everywhere, and I heard people chattering, creating an uproarious din. I felt scared of walking around so many people for some reason, but I was observing them. I saw people walking while looking at their phones or friends. I also saw couples walking while talking to each other with sweet smiles.

Of course, I also saw drunk people and people spending time in their own way.

And I saw *him* among those people…

He didn’t really seem out of place. It wasn't the first time I thought this way, but I felt like he would always look natural wherever he went. I wondered if it was the same for me. I couldn't help but wonder about my current appearance. I looked to the side and was astonished to see my reflection on the glass.

I looked more out of place than I thought.

I realized that I didn’t fit in here. I smiled bitterly at the thought, but I continued walking.

I was convinced that I might feel a sense of belonging if I just walked alongside Mr. Ki-Young, and I hoped that others wouldn't look at me with strange gazes as if I didn't belong here.

“What do you think?” Lee Ki-Young asked.

“Excuse me?” I questioned.

“Of this place…” Lee Ki-Young added.

“When you say this place…”

“I’m talking about Earth. The place we’re walking on right now,” Lee Ki-Young clarified.

“…”

“Do you find it uncomfortable?” he asked.

“No, I don't,” I answered.

“Then…”

“I feel really comfortable here. This place isn’t as dangerous as the continent, and there aren't many things I need to worry about. This place isn’t as burdensome as the continent,” I told him.

“When you say it isn’t as burdensome—”

“*Um*… Mr. Ki-Young. You don’t have to worry about what I said earlier because I said it without thinking,” I interrupted.

“I’m saying this because I knew you said it without thinking. You don’t seem satisfied with your current life. I believe there’s a different reason behind it. Are you having a hard time fitting in?” he asked.

I had never thought about it before. I had spent a long time here, but I never really thought that way. However, I did feel like I wasn't quite fitting in. If someone were to ask me whether I had fully adapted to my life here or not, I would respond with the latter.

“I understand. We've lived on the continent for many years, after all, so I’m sure it’s hard to adapt to life here. In addition, you lived for far more years on the continent than here on Earth,” he continued.

“…”

“You probably think that you don’t fit in here or that you’re the odd one out,” he added.

Lee Ki-Young was right.

“However, you’re not the only one who feels that way. I’m sure everyone feels that way. Socializing with others and trying to adapt to society isn’t easy, after all. The heaviness of the burden that everyone is carrying definitely varies, but everyone is probably experiencing something similar,” he said.

“I-I see,” I stuttered.

“I’m not telling you to endure it just because everyone is struggling. The point I want to make is that knowing there are many people who are experiencing similar hardships will give you strength. Those people walking on the streets, the people hanging out with their friends, and the people who are busy on their phones are all like you, Mr. Hyun-Sung,” he explained.

“…”

“Even though we’ve never spoken to them, everybody here can listen and understand each other. It might make it easier if you think of them as being in the same position as you. I know it’s not much, but I believe that’s the first step. If that's not enough, then we have to go even deeper,” Lee Ki-Young suggested with a smile.

“By deeper, I mean, I want you to think that our guild members will understand us,” Lee Ki-Young said. His eyes narrowed into slits and were full of mirth as he smiled at me.

“If we go deeper than that, then there's no one else but me, Mr. Hyun-Sung,” Lee Ki-Young said, "I will be the only one who will understand you by then."

It felt like he was telling me not to worry.

“So you've also…” I trailed off.

“I don’t think there’s a person alive who isn't afraid of those things. Everyone looks like they’re doing fine, but I’m sure they had the same thought at least once, and I’m not an exception,” he said.

"*Ah…*"

"That's why I can tell you this. I was the same. I thought about the people who would understand and help me. Of course, you were one of those people I thought about," he continued.

"What?"

"We experienced and shared many things. Am I—"

"N-No, you're not wrong. You're not… wrong at all," I answered, interrupting him.

"I'm glad."

It felt like the bugs that were eating away at me had disappeared in an instant. I was no longer anxious, and my racing heart was starting to calm down.

I couldn't help but smile. He hadn't said anything grand, but his words comforted me more than anything else and helped me be at ease.

"I-I'm glad. I didn't know that you thought of me that way…" I told him.

However, the situation took a drastic turn soon afterward.

"How can I not think that? Of course, I don't fully understand you, and I know you don't fully understand me, but…" he paused.

"…"

"We carried each other's burdens, didn't we?" Lee Ki-Young asked.

"*Ah…*"

"You helped me carry my burdens," Lee Ki-Young continued.

"*Uh…*"

"I thought you would understand me, Mr. Hyun-Sung. I thought you would think the same way as me," Lee Ki-Young added.

"*Uh… uh…*"

"The reason I'm being presumptuous toward you is because you've always been my pillar of support," he said.

No, I had never been his pillar of support. He had carried my burdens with me, but I had never carried his burdens with him. I actually ran away, which led me to where I was at the moment.

"No, I-I…"

I was starting to get dizzy, and it was getting harder for me to breathe. The world around me became blurry, and the voices melted into a cacophony of inscrutable noises. A terrible sense of shame enveloped me.

'Shitty human.'

"I…" I paused.

'Selfish human. You're an extremely arrogant and shitty human who cares about no one else aside from yourself.'

It felt like the face in front of me was saying that to me.

'I thought you would carry my burdens with me. Since I carried your burdens with you, I thought you would do the same for me.'

"So…"

My eyes were brimming with tears, and I couldn't tell where I was right now.

I whipped around and saw myself holding a sword.

"What are you doing here, Kim Hyun-Sung?"

I saw a 22-year-old Kim Hyun-Sung holding an indiscernible corpse.

"Are you going to run this time, too? You said you wouldn't run away anymore. You said you would never run away again. You made that decision after losing your hyung," the figure said.

I turned around and saw a monster with horns.

“I’m the one carrying his burden, not you. You’re just running away because you're too much of a coward to do anything, you selfish bastard.”

‘No, I… ’

“He had sacrificed everything for you. He threw himself out there to carry your burdens. And look at what he got in the end. We look the same now. You're really disgusting. You don’t deserve to stand next to him. A rat like you deserves to rot in hell for all eternity.”

‘That’s not what I wanted to do… That wasn’t my intention at all! It was just the most reasonable decision at the time! The most reasonable decision was to… ruin everything.’

“What have you ever done for him? He had chosen to struggle and carry your own burdens with you, yet how did you repay him? What have you ever done for him, you arrogant piece of shit.”

‘I… I… ’

“Now it’s your turn to sacrifice.”

- Now it’s your turn to sacrifice, Kim Hyun-Sung.

---

1. Kim Hyun-Sung’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 741
VALUE (7)

"Piece of shit."

'I'm[1] *not.'*

"Arrogant fool."

'No… that's not true.'

"You dirty, despicable, disgraceful monster."

'I… '

"I…"

"Mr. Hyun-Sung!" Lee Ki-Young called out.

"I-I…"

"Mr. Hyun-Sung?" Lee Ki-Young called out again.

Fwooooooooosh!

"Mr. Hyun-Sung!" Lee Ki-Young shouted.

"…"

"Are you okay?" Lee Ki-Young asked.

"I… Just now…" I mumbled.

"You've been pale… I'm sorry if I was being rude," Lee Ki-Young said.

"No, it's fine. I… right now…"

“Yes?”

“Where… Where… *Haa… haa…* Where am I…” I panted.

“Are you okay, Mr. Hyun-Sung? H-Hold on…” he said.

The world that had slowed down returned to normal, but I was still crying. I couldn't quite calm down, and I felt so dizzy that I couldn't even think about wiping my tears away. I looked around again, but I couldn’t see anything. Kim Hyun-Sung of the first life and Kim Hyun-Sung, who had become a monster, had all disappeared. When Lee Ki-Young grabbed my shoulder, my frantically beating heart finally started to calm down.

“I think we should look for a place for you to rest. Let’s go someplace nearby…” Lee Ki-Young suggested.

Lee Ki-Young was both shocked and confused.

“Actually, I think it’s best if we go to a hospital,” Lee Ki-Young said.

Lee Ki-Young looked desperate and worried.

“Are you okay? Have you come back to your senses?” Lee Ki-Young asked.

“Yes…”

“Mr. Hyun-Sung?” Lee Ki-Young called out.

“I’m fine. I think I’ll be fine if I rest a little more…” I told him.

I looked at him slowly, but I still wasn't exactly calm. The way he was biting his lips made it seem like he was angry at the current situation, and I felt like I understood why he was angry. He was probably blaming himself, and I was convinced that it was the case, as he had always been the type of person to blame himself rather than others.

“I’m sorry,” Lee Ki-Young said.

However, Lee Ki-Young hadn't done anything wrong.

“I don’t know exactly what’s going on or what kind of situation you’re in, but I’m sorry for not noticing it sooner. I never imagined you’d be struggling this much,” Lee Ki-Young continued.

My issue was definitely just a trivial matter compared to his pain.

“I should’ve taken better care of you…” Lee Ki-Young added.

He no longer needed to make any sacrifices.

“*Ah*… it’s okay. I don’t…”

“*Huh?*”

“I don’t want to cause you any more trouble,” I said.

“You don’t have to think that way,” Lee Ki-Young told me.

“Don’t worry about me anymore. Y-You’ve done enough. Just telling me that and thinking of me that way is— and… it isn't that serious to begin with. I just felt a bit dizzy, so you don’t have to worry about me,” I reassured him.

“How can I not worry? Let’s not stay here and go…”

“No, I’m really fine. I’m better now,” I said, interrupting him.

I was truly okay now. I had just realized what I needed to do.

“Please, let’s just…”

“No. You… really don’t have to worry about me,” I told him.

I finally realized what I was capable of doing and the task I had to do.

"I’m glad… to hear you say that, but…” Lee Ki-Young paused.

“I feel like I’m always making you worry,” I said.

“What?”

“I feel like I’m always making you feel worried. This happened last time as well… I remember that something like this happened back then. If you hadn't found me back then, I would’ve been lost forever. Unlike you, I’m a very weak human. I would’ve stayed there. I really appreciate it, really,” I told him.

“What?”

“Thank you very much for allowing me to look at new scenery,” I continued.

“What are you saying all of a sudden?” Lee Ki-Young asked.

“Thank you very much for carrying my burdens with me, and I’m really sorry. Not only did I make you carry burdens you shouldn’t be carrying, but I also ignored them and ran away, and for that, I’m sorry. I was just avoiding it, afraid of facing it…” I said.

“Everyone runs away, and I've never blamed you, Mr. Hyun-Sung. You also carried my—”

“No, I've never done that. I gave you my burdens, but I ran away when it was supposed to be my turn to help you carry your burdens. I had done nothing but ignore, avoid, and run away. P-Perhaps I’m waiting for someone to rescue me from this place as well. I’m hoping… he’ll come again. All I did was run… while having those types of thoughts. I’m a weak human who doesn’t deserve to stand by your side,” I interrupted him.

“…”

“Honestly, I’m not all that different now. I’m afraid to… leave this place. I always get worried whenever I’m given choices like this. I can’t stand it because it scares me. I’d appreciate it if you or the others held my hand. I think I can be a bit more certain if you hold my hand like you did back then. However, I just realized requesting that just makes me childish, and I might actually inflict pain on others by doing that,” I continued.

“…”

“I finally understand that I need to step outside by myself this time,” I added.

“I don’t understand what you’re saying right now, but Mr. Hyun-Sung…” Lee Ki-Young paused.

"…"

"I'm sure whatever you want will all come true, Mr. Hyun-Sung. It'll all work out no matter what choices you make," Lee Ki-Young continued.

That was what I needed to hear. I was waiting for words of comfort, even at times like this.

"You don't have to be afraid," Lee Ki-Young added.

This man had never been afraid of anything. He looked at the world with a positive attitude, even though he was dying and suffering from amnesia.

Now that I thought about it, that was probably the reason he managed to step outside. If I could see the world the same way, I could also escape the fear of failing. I knew that was the right choice, as he had never been mistaken about anything.

However, that was nothing more than giving him my burdens as well.

I had basically forced him to make a choice.

"I'm sorry," I said.

"What?"

"I'm really sorry for everything I've done," I told him.

It was my turn to take responsibility.

I needed to carry everything and put an end to everything.

I turned and started walking away slowly.

"Mr. Hyun-Sung! Mr. Hyun-Sung!"

I heard Lee Ki-Young calling me from behind, but I didn't stop or look back. If I looked back, I had a feeling that I would no longer feel determined. I felt him grab my hand, but I had to shake it off.

"Mr. Hyun-Sung!"

The scenery around me peeled away, and the people around me stared at me in shock.

My shirt and jeans had changed into heavy armor, and the fancy streets became darker. The people disappeared one by one, and the sunset was engulfed in darkness. I could hear a *splash*, and I caught a whiff of the unpleasant smell in the room.

An unknown amount of time passed, and I saw a woman stroking me while I was sitting before a large table.

“Lucifer,” I said.

-…

“Lucifer,” I repeated.

- What brings you here? Did something happen? Or is there something you’re not satisfied with?

“I want to leave,” I answered.

- What?

“I want to leave this place,” I said.

-…

“I have to go outside,” I told her.

- I don’t understand what you’re saying… Didn’t I tell you? If you try to take care of things, it’ll destroy everything.

“No, that won’t happen,” I said.

- Do you have proof?

“I’ll put an end to it. I’m not going to run away anymore,” I said.

- That’s an interesting thought, you scummy human. You’re not the protagonist. Even if you decide to carry all the burden and put an end to it, there’s no guarantee that

it'll all work out. All you did was become a regressor. That's the only special thing about you. You were chosen because you got lucky, that's all. No, you were unlucky. I guarantee that you're going to regret leaving this place. You'll be in despair for making the wrong choice this time, too.

"…"

- It'll be wise if you just wait obediently. Don't you think so? You'll end up failing again.

"That won't happen," I said.

- Based on what?

"I decided that I won't let that happen," I answered.

- You won't be in the ending that you're imagining right now. Are you okay with not having the life of your dreams?

"It doesn't matter," I told her.

- You've been hiding all this time because you were scared, and now, you want to sacrifice for the future of others…

"I just realized what my role is all this while. I made it clear that I wanted to get out of here, Lucifer. That was part of the contract," I reminded her.

- How about thinking about it again?

"…"

- You're going to regret it.'

"I've regretted it enough already," I said.

- You're going to fail.

"I finally understand that you're the one who won't let me put an end to this, Lucifer," I said.

- I want to see the end more than anyone else.

“No, what you want is chaos,” I retorted.

- You still want to go out? I can do it, you know. It's really easy for me to make your dreams come true.

A dream-like reality unfolded before my eyes again. A red sunset was setting in the dark sky, and the sun was starting to rise. I saw the guild members, and they were laughing while talking about trivial things. I was also there smiling brightly with them. It was a very beautiful sight. It was so beautiful that I smiled unknowingly while staring transfixed at it.

- Look at you. You’re smiling like a child. This is your dream, right? You've put the highest value on this scene. How about this? It’s kind of unrealistic, but how about we go further back into the past? I think it’ll be fun if you guys end up meeting before entering the continent. I think it’ll be fun if you guys were classmates. If not that, then…

“I want to go out. Let me go, Lucifer. Carry out the contract,” I ordered.

-…

“…”

-…

- You fool. You’re a stupid human.

I felt like my eyes were opening slowly, and I saw a scenery that was different from the beautiful scenery I had seen earlier. It was a ruin filled with darkness and an unpleasant stench. The place riddled with the corpses of angels definitely felt more familiar than the scenery I saw earlier.

I raised my hand slowly and saw my monster-like arm. My visage looked unfamiliar to me, and perhaps it was because of my large horns. I saw my reflection in a puddle of rotten water, and I looked more hideous than I thought.

However, the sight made me realize that I was back in reality.

While I was ridiculing myself, a familiar voice interrupted me.

[A total of 2,124 Forced Quests are in progress. View the unread Forced Quests.]

[Creating a legendary-ranked Forced Quest.]

[I have forgiven your sins. Rise, regressor of Altanus. (0/1)]

[Quest Clear Reward - Future (0/1)]

"*Haha*…"

[Creating a legendary-ranked Forced Quest.]

[I have forgiven your sins. I beg of you, rise, regressor of Altanus. (0/1)]

[Quest Clear Reward - Future (0/1)]

"*Hahaha*… *Ha*… *Heuk*… *Heuuk*…"

[Creating a legendary-ranked Forced Quest.]

[I have forgiven your sins. Rise, regressor of Altanus. If you do, I'll give you the future. (0/1)]

[Quest Clear Reward - Future (0/1)]

"*Heuk… Heuuuk…*"

[Creating a legendary-ranked Forced Quest.]

[I have forgiven your sins. Rise, regressor of Altanus. If you do, I'll give you whatever you want. (0/1)]

[Quest Clear Reward - Future (0/1)]

"*Heuuk… Heuk…*"

[Creating a legendary-ranked Forced Quest.]

[Please. Please. Rise, regressor of Altanus. If you do, I'll give you the future you dreamed of. (0/1)]

[Quest Clear Reward - Future (0/1)]

"*Heuuuuuk…*"

[Creating a legendary-ranked Forced Quest.]

[I have forgiven your sins. Please rise, regressor of Altanus. If you do, I'll give you the future. I'll give you the future no matter what. I'll give you everything you want in my name. (0/1)]

[Quest Clear Reward - Future (0/1)]

"*Heuuu… Heuk…*"

[Creating a legendary-ranked Forced Quest.]

[Wake up, Kim Hyun-Sung. Please… don't die. I beg of you. (0/1)]

[Quest Clear Reward - Future (0/1)]

"*Heuk… Heuuuk…*"

---

1. Kim Hyun-Sung's POV ☜

CHAPTER 742
TO THE END (1)

I[1] saw a shocked Park Deok-Gu, and he still looked like his usual stupid self. The unpleasant stench of his sweat put me in a bad mood, but I was willing to put up with it since he had mindlessly run all the way here.

He wasn't the only one who was shocked. I was supposed to be in the situation room, so it wasn't strange that they were shocked to see me here. Some of them were obviously wary of me, but they seemed really relieved upon seeing the pig nod at them.

'I hope they don't start spreading rumors about me calling Park Deok-Gu a pig.'

I thought I got a bit emotional without realizing it. My life here wasn't that bad, thanks to Lee Ji-Hye, but it was undeniable that it was a pretty stressful life. I felt like I had expressed too many emotions at once, so I did my best to calm down.

I looked up and saw them looking at each other.

'It's been a while since I've seen them.'

Ahn Ki-Mo and Kim Ye-Ri, who were like a package, were here. Even Hwang Jung-Yeon was here. The other guild members had to have been dispatched to the other base in order to maintain the balance.

I had never seen the others before. Actually, I had never seen the majority of the members. Their stats weren't bad, but they were lacking. Either their Stamina was too high, or the Magic of the mages was too low. They didn't seem useful to me.

'Where did they find all these useless members?'

I wondered if it had been a bit too difficult for them to find decent people, but I couldn't really rely on them when they couldn't see other people's stats like me.

"Hyung-nim? Is that you?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

'Of course it's me. Who else would I be?'

"It is the sub guild master."

"You should've told me ahead of time that you were already here! I knew something felt strange! How long have you been here? Actually, why are you here?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"It'll take too long for me to explain, so I'll tell you later. I think it's best if we start moving. I actually have something to tell you, so let's hurry and get out of here," I suggested.

"No, you should explain…"

"Let's go," I urged.

"O-Okay," he said.

"There you are. It's been a while."

Ahn Ki-Mo, who dreamed of becoming a pirate king, reacted as if he had been expecting this turn of events. Even if Jo Hye-Jin did her best to hide it, I was sure she had noticed something strange. She was pretty quick-witted, so I was sure she understood what was going on. She probably started doubting things upon suddenly receiving the order to follow Alps.

"Been a while," Kim Ye-Ri said a short greeting and raised her hand as if saying that she didn't care whether I was here or not, but she seemed happy to see me. She looked like she wanted to run at me right now, but she was trying her best to stay calm.

'Seriously, be honest with yourself. I know you're fond of me. Acting that way actually makes you look uncool.'

Lastly, Alps sighed deeply, looking relieved. I thought it would be best to greet her first because she seemed to be having a hard time talking to me first. Of course, I understood what she was feeling right now.

"Thank you," I said.

“N-No problem, sir!” Alps shouted.

‘I like her energy. This is how new members should act. They have to be enthusiastic. But to be honest, I’m not that thankful. I am happy to see these guys, though. I’m honestly happy, but being happy won’t resolve this issue.’

I wanted to ask why they came here.

‘Should I have ordered them not to do anything?’

I started thinking that I should have told them not to do anything else when I met them while wearing a mask. Actually, the fact that Alps' dog had memorized my scent might be the reason Jo Hye-Jin had decided to execute this kind of plan.

‘It’s all my fault.’

I was already smiling, so I just left it at that. I was annoyed by the fact that something unknown to me had happened behind the scenes, but I’d soon know about it anyway.

I looked around, and the incompetent members that Park Deok-Gu had picked avoided my gaze.

‘What should I do with these guys?’

It felt kind of rushed, but I could definitely put together a simple defense formation.

‘They don’t seem to be in good condition, though.’

Fortunately, the reliable pig was here. They should be able to fight in a few skirmishes, so when I was about to give an order—

“Stay beside me, hyung-nim. Actually, I think it’ll be better if I carry you,” Park Deok-Gu said, interrupting me.

“What?”

“Everyone, move!" Park Deok-Gu shouted.

‘What the?’

“Get into position and move. Hey, hurry up! So… that’s… the 24th. The 24th!” Park Deok-Gu yelled.

‘What is he talking about?’

My question was immediately answered.

‘This pig… ’

I saw the troops getting into formation.

‘What the hell is this?’

I knew from the start that they were trained well, but Park Deok-Gu’s family had shown me something more impressive than I thought.

‘Is this even possible?’

It looked like a square-shaped puzzle made up of irregular shapes. It was kind of sloppy, but they looked stable, so I couldn’t really criticize them. Park Deok-Gu was in the center rather than at the front, but I was sure their usual formation was different. The altered formation seemed like it was made to prioritize the safety of the rearguards.

‘It’s well-balanced.’

The fact that Park Deok-Gu wasn’t in the front could be their biggest weakness, but in some ways, the formation was stronger. The formation reminded me of a turtle. Like a turtle hiding in its shell, it felt like they could do the same, and I couldn’t help but look at Park Deok-Gu.

‘Who the hell are you?’

“You’re the one who told me that if you can do it, I can do better,” Park Deok-Gu said.

‘Yeah, but still.’

“Forward! Forward!” Park Deok-Gu shouted.

The troops started moving, and he started moving faster while making sure that I

was as close to his shield as possible. The ride was pretty comfortable, and this seemed like a good time to start talking.

“Where are we going?” I asked.

“We’re going to head outside the temple since that was the plan,” Park Deok-Gu replied.

“What’s the plan?” I asked.

“I don’t know the details, but… the only thing Hye-Jin noonim said was to come outside as soon as we found what we came for… I didn’t know what she meant back then, but now, it seemed like she was referring to you. My mission was to find you and come outside,” Park Deok-Gu answered.

“Have you guys secured an exit?” I asked.

“I told you, I don’t know the details. This plan was top secret. Hold on, I think there’s going to be a fight up ahead. Let’s talk later,” Park Deok-Gu said.

I couldn’t really see, but I could tell what was going on without having to look through the Telescope.

“Hey, move! Don’t just stand there! Hey, Kim! What are you doing?! Move! Hey! Mr. Jung! Heal! Heal! I told you many times that the timing is important! *Ah*, that’s nice! Right there! Ye-Ri! Dance of Enchantment! Dance of Enchantment!” Park Deok-Gu ordered.

‘Let’s not do that dance, please. Did you decide to use it as an official skill? Really?’

“You’re doing great! Just like that! We can win if you do that! Hang in there! Don’t back down! No! Don’t do that! Mr. Ahn Ki-Mo! Please fill that spot! *Ahh!* You’re frustrating me!” Park Deok-Gu complained.

‘He knows what he’s doing, right?’

“Miss Jung-Yeon! Protection! Protection! Nice! Niceee!!!” he yelled.

Park Deok-Gu was loud, and he cheered them on. What they were doing didn’t feel organized, but they managed to break through and Park Deok-Gu looked at me again

as if checking to see if his cub was doing okay.

“So… what were we talking about again?” Park Deok-Gu said.

“You idiot. The top secret plan, man. I asked if you guys have secured an exit,” I reminded him.

I wanted to smash his back and yell at him, but I couldn’t because I was afraid that his troops would hear it. I sounded annoyed, so he had to have realized that I was starting to get angry.

“S-So…” Park Deok-Gu stuttered.

“Don’t panic and speak calmly, man,” I told him.

“Well… I don’t know the details, but I don’t think they've secured an exit… I-I honestly don’t know…” Park Deok-Gu said.

“How can you not know about that?” I questioned.

“Only Hye-Jin noonim and a few people know about what’s going on. It’s probably… the Mercenary Queen of the Red Mercenary Guild and Park Yeon-Joo noonim of the Black Swan Guild. There’s also Miss Kim Mi-Young, the Republic, the Union, and the Kingdom of Others… Probably less than a few figures know about it,” Park Deok-Gu answered.

“What?”

“I don’t know where to start, but they said there was a spy. They’re traitors who want to side with the demons wearing the angel masks… I honestly don’t know how they even met them,” he continued.

I felt kind of bad.

‘Ah, I did that.’

“I’m not sure if things hadn't worked out, but… since things turned out that way, the command center said that they couldn’t trust anyone. Hye-Jin noonim told us to think of it as gathering parts,” he added.

“Parts?”

“She didn’t mean like getting actual parts to build something… How should I say it?” Park Deok-Gu paused.

“I know you’re just saying that as an expression,” I told him.

“*Ah*, that’s it. Once we complete our missions, we’ll get the result we want, so I can’t tell you even if I wanted to tell you. *Ah,* but there’s one thing I can tell you,” Park Deok-Gu said.

“What is it?” I asked.

“Hye-Jin noonim told me this…” he paused.

“Okay.”

“She said that there will never be a situation where we’ll run away,” Park Deok-Gu continued.

“…”

‘I think I know what she’s talking about… ’

When I first heard what had happened, I thought that they had already secured an exit, but if Jo Hye-Jin had told him that, then it meant the command center had something in mind.

‘How are they planning on fighting them?’

And what was she talking about when she said 'parts'? What did she need to win? It was impossible to run away using Teleport, which was exactly why they had to ride the ark here.

‘Could it be a control device?’

If they somehow managed to get to the control device that was suppressing everyone's mana, then it would be possible to run using Teleport. Unfortunately, the troops had spread out, which meant they were attacking multiple places at once.

Park Deok-Gu was right—retreat wasn't an option.

‘But we have to run… ’

I had to return to that place to see the ending Kasugano Yuno had seen at the castle walls and to execute the ending where I would die after getting stabbed by Kim Hyun-Sung. Regardless of their plan, fighting here to the death wasn’t the right ending.

‘Ah, I think something went wrong.’

Kim Hyun-Sung’s voice suddenly popped into my head as I started tapping my thigh.

"Back then, Miss Ha-Yan managed to teleport the entire Sacred Democratic Country away."

“*What?*”

"It would probably be easier to understand if I told you that she changed the topography of the entire continent."

I was dumbstruck. If I couldn't go to the place where the ending was going to take place, then I could just bring that place over here.

“Ha… haha, shit… Shit! Ha… Hahahaha!”

I had finally figured it out.

“Amazing.”

Jo Hye-Jin was planning on moving the entire northern wall in front of the temple.

---

1. Lee Ki-Young’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 743
TO THE END (2)

'Our Hye-Jin really is determined. How come I never thought of this?'

I was convinced that the reason I had never considered it was that it was simply too unrealistic. The very foundation of this plan also depended on Jung Ha-Yan.

'It's possible.'

Jung Ha-Yan had a history of casting a reverse gravity spell on the entire northern region, so Jung Ha-Yan was definitely different from your ordinary mage.

Of course, a mage majoring in gravity-related spells couldn't possibly become an authoritative figure in the Teleport department, but Jung Ha-Yan didn't need to worry about any of that, as she could cast anything.

It might be better to ask what she couldn't do rather than asking her whether she could cast a certain spell or not. If she had enough time to do the research, our archmage was more than capable of producing results.

Jung Ha-Yan wasn't lounging around while waiting for her mana to recover. She was preparing herself as well. I was kind of confused as to how she was communicating with Jo Hye-Jin, but the fact that they had come to an agreement didn't seem strange at all, as Jo Hye-Jin wasn't in her right mind in the first place.

Naturally, Jung Ha-Yan wasn't the one behind this crazy plan.

'It's pretty surprising.'

The Jo Hye-Jin I knew had always been cautious and an advocate for stability. Actually, before talking about her personality, Jo Hye-Jin wasn't the type to throw her dice for plans like this. I noticed that even while we were playing chess. Whenever she threw the dice with the go big or go home mindset, it was always because…

'…she had no other choice.'

The current situation was probably the worst-case scenario in her eyes, so she had no choice but to make a decision. I was sure she came up with this plan with Miss Kim Mi-Young, the strategic planning department, and the key members of the committee headquarters' help, but… I thought she was amazing because she managed to execute all this. In other words, this operation was highly likely to succeed.

Perhaps the only thing that would increase the probability of victory was…

“She’s waiting for me to figure this out,” I said.

Rescuing me wasn’t her only goal. I was an important piece that would make this plan successful—an essential component necessary to carry out this plan. I found it fascinating that Jo Hye-Jin had rolled the dice in a gamble that was so risky that even one mistake could cause everything to fall apart.

“H-Have you figured something out? Or did you already know about this?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

“Deok-Gu,” I said.

“?”

“Did Hye-Jin tell you to give me something? Maybe something that’s been sealed or some kind of letter,” I asked.

“*Ah!* That reminds me,” Park Deok-Gu replied.

‘This pig. What would you have done if I didn’t notice what was going on?’

“But Hye-Jin noonim said not to open this no matter what,” Park Deok-Gu said.

“It’s because it’s for me,” I told him.

“She said not to open it no matter what,” Park Deok-Gu repeated.

“Why would she give you something she wouldn't want you to open? Hurry,” I urged him.

“She said not to open it no matter what situation I’m in. She repeated it so many

times that I can still remember what she looked like when she said it to me," Park Deok-Gu said.

"Stop talking nonsense and give it to me, damn it!" I shouted.

"O-Okay…" Park Deok-Gu muttered.

Park Deok-Gu searched his pockets until he finally took out a Goddess' Hand Mirror.

'Shit, it's just like I thought.'

The annoying feeling I was feeling just a few moments ago eventually disappeared, along with my nervousness and anxiety. I was feeling better just by understanding how things were going, so I couldn't help but acknowledge that Ji-Hye noona was right.

It wasn't serious, but it became painfully clear that I had the tendency to react *that*[1]way.

The holy power inside the temple was interfering with the hand mirror's signal, so I understood right away what I had to do next.

'These guys are really crazy.'

Were they planning on doing this without a control tower? It was possible, though. The hand mirrors could connect to each other if they were close enough, but one wouldn't be able to hear anything once they were beyond a certain distance apart from each other.

That was the reason I thought the other parties were in charge of setting up the control tower…

'That changes things.'

I had the ability to see the bigger picture, and I had the voice of light that allowed me to send messages to anyone. However, I wasn't sure if this was the type of control tower that Jo Hye-Jin wanted. Basically, she wanted a device that allowed units to communicate with each other without any issues.

The only one who could make this happen was probably…

'Max, I mean, my son is here.'

Rift Museum Level Five Manager Max. He was definitely in one of the parties that had scattered throughout the temple.

"Deok-Gu," I called out.

"You called? We still have a long way to go…" Park Deok-Gu answered.

"Where did Max go?" I asked.

"…"

"Where did he go?" I repeated.

"How did you know Max was here?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"I just know. Did he send a new dummy here? There's no way he'll send the main unit. Who did he go with? Hee-Ra noona? The Black Swan Guild? Is he with a guild from the Republic? Maybe the Union of Kingdoms?" I questioned.

"I-I don't really remember, but it's probably the Friendship Clan, I mean, the Friendship Guild," Park Deok-Gu replied.

"What?"

"I said it's the Friendship Guild," Park Deok-Gu repeated.

"So… where exactly is that guild from, damn it?" I asked.

"I thought you knew, hyung-nim," Park Deok-Gu said.

"I can't remember every small guild like that," I told him.

"You don't remember?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"Remember what?" I questioned.

"When you went to experience the Rift Museum after dressing up as a girl, they're the people who went in with you," Park Deok-Gu responded.

‘I didn’t dress up as a girl. I actually became one.’

“…”

“They’re all from Lindel. There’s Lee Chul-Woo, Gook Minji, and more. I don't remember their names, though, but anyway, back then…” Park Deok-Gu paused.

“…”

“You really don’t remember?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

“No, I do remember,” I replied with a frown.

‘What the hell? The Friendship Guild?’

I could still remember those incompetent bunch of people, but it wasn't because they were particularly skilled.

‘Are they even skilled enough to participate in this plan?’

I was at a loss for words because I thought it was ridiculous how they got involved in the guild that was created with only powerful people on the continent. I knew they were stupid, but they had family who cherished them.

It was actually ironic that Jo Hye-Jin had decided to give them that task.

‘Is she crazy? Shit. They’re completely incompetent fools.’

I was hoping Park Deok-Gu had the wrong information. I looked through the Telescope hastily, but I couldn't see the faces of those people, whose faces had long faded away from my memories.

“They achieved tremendous growth in recent years. They started off as a clan, but something must’ve caused them to have a change of heart because they grew so much to the extent of surprising everyone. I’m not sure if it was to participate in this operation, but I got the feeling that their skills had improved a lot, and that’s why Hye-Jin noonim gave them that task without much complaint. I mean, I don’t really know what they’re supposed to do there, but… they’re probably…”

Something was probably going to happen, so I decided to message Rafael.

We had to have walked quite a bit because I started seeing familiar faces. I wasn't familiar with the others, but I could see my son, Max. His expression was grim, and his small hand was holding the hand of a mysterious man.

I used Mind's Eye and saw through the mysterious man's identity.

'Lee Chul-Woo? Shit.'

The memories I had long forgotten started to reappear in my head. I was hoping that I was wrong, but they were definitely the party members who had entered the Rift Museum with me. I cursed inwardly and stared at them again…

"*Huh?*"

I noticed that they had changed a bit—no, a lot.

'What's with these guys? Their items are really good.'

Basically, their stats had increased a lot. Their stats had become high enough to get a nod of approval from me. To be honest, I didn't think these guys were capable of achieving this level of growth, but their items caught my attention the most.

'What the hell? Where did they get those items? How much did they have to spend?'

I thought they would soon disband their clan, but it seemed that the clan members had actually gotten even closer than before. It wasn't just Lee Chul-Woo and Gook Minji. The people who had entered the Rift Museum with me during that time were covered in expensive and high-level items; even the new guild members were covered in expensive gear.

Shockingly, one of them was even covered in gold from head to toe.

'What the heck… Did they win the lottery or something?'

If they hadn't won the lottery or something, there would be no explanation as to how they somehow managed to obtain such expensive items.

The clan had to have a lot of money to spare, so I was sure they recruited other famous adventurers and eventually grew the clan into a guild with their overwhelming financial power. As expected, I saw guild members stronger than the

founding members, and on top of that, one of them was a hero of our past lives, whom Kim Hyun-Sung and I were trying to recruit discreetly.

I was sure some of them had joined the Friendship Guild because they liked money, but money wasn't the only thing that could convince those heroes to join.

I immediately realized that the Friendship Guild's public reputation had to be pretty great. The way they were fighting the angels was also quite impressive, and as if proving to me that I had made a mistake in assuming that they would soon disband, they moved in unison with firm determination in their eyes.

Their eyes were telling me that they weren't going to lose.

'Wow, I didn't think things would turn out this way.'

Someone had once said that if one were to keep on doing good deeds in the world, one would be rewarded for their good deeds someday.

'The snowball actually became that big?'

It could have been all meaningless. Who would have thought that the warmth I had shown to the small party back then would come back to repay me like this? I had offered my warm hand to the struggling party, and they grew to an unimaginable level after carving my one instance of kindness into their hearts.

They had become big enough to take on massive roles.

They had become proud adventurers who were indispensable to the continent.

I wanted to cry at the revelation, but I knew that I shouldn't shed a tear for the sake of the people who had decided to come here.

'Don't cry, Lee Ki-Young. It'll be rude to the heroes who came all the way here.'

- Chul-Woo oppa!

- I know, Minji. Are you okay, Mr. Max? Is this place…

- We have to go a little further. I still can't find the exact location. I know it's around here somewhere, but…

‘Look at my son pretending to be serious.’

I thought it would be best if I created a quest right away and sent him the location because I had an idea as to where he was headed. As expected, it didn’t take long for my worried son to be happy once again.

- It’s my father!

‘Call me Dad.’

The heroes instantly burst into the first control room. Max hurriedly installed a control tower inside the temple, and I was soon able to access the Goddess’ Hand Mirror. I even heard a familiar voice that sounded like they had been waiting for me.

- I was waiting for you, sir. It’s Kim Mi-Young.

I also heard another voice.

- Mr. Ki-Young?

---

1. probably talking about how the MC wants to have everything under control ASAP, so he panics if it's otherwise. This is just my opinion, though - Veela ☜

CHAPTER 744
TO THE END (3)

"…"

"Did something good happen? Was it a success? Or do you really have something up your sleeve?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"…"

'You finally woke up.'

- Mr. Ki-Young, can you hear me?

'I do, man.'

- I-It's me. Kim Hyun-Sung.

'I know without you telling me.'

- It's Kim Hyun-Sung.

'You don't have to repeat yourself.'

I blanked out briefly, and then I started smiling. I couldn't show any other emotions, but I clenched my fists at the revelation.

I tried not to look, but my head turned unconsciously, and what I saw through the Telescope was Kim Hyun-Sung standing in the ruins by himself. He still had large horns on his head, and he was still surrounded by what looked like black miasma, which meant he could still wield black magic.

The only difference was that I could finally see his face again.

'Seeing his face makes a huge difference.'

He no longer looked like a monster. He looked like a charming, evil antagonist.

'Shit, I knew those horns would look good on you.'

His physique had changed to match his face, so I wondered if someone stylish had designed him to look that way. He had definitely cried a lot because his eyes were red.

Actually, he was crying right now.

'I'm sure it feels great to be alive again.'

The way he held onto the Goddess' Hand Mirror and spoke desperately made him look kind of pitiful. I could see that he was fumbling with it, so he definitely thought that he had pressed the wrong button or something.

- Shit. Why… isn't this working?

'It's working.'

"I can hear you, Mr. Hyun-Sung," I replied.

"Is Hyun-Sung bro awake? Really? He's awake? Nice… Everything is going well," Park Deok-Gu said.

It was great, but how did he wake up? I never imagined he'd return to normal on his own. Things were so unstable back then that I started thinking of a surprise event that'd help Kim Hyun-Sung regain consciousness and make Doom Hyun-Sung disappear.

'Was there a time limit or something? Or… did he experience something similar to an awakening? There's a cliche where the protagonists become even stronger externally and internally when they come back to their senses after turning evil.'

Kim Hyun-Sung would definitely become even stronger. I welcomed this side of him because I was honestly worried that Doom Hyun-Sung was going to stab me, and there was no way he would stab me lightly if that ended up happening.

Kim Hyun-Sung had to be awake so that he would at least be considerate of me, who was afraid of pain. Of course, I couldn't really expect that from him since he had been

betrayed and was both angry and confused about it, but at this point, I'd rather see him awake.

I started grinning as I listened to his voice.

A small issue was that this channel was connected to the command center. He had probably turned to this channel out of desperation because he didn't have his personal hand mirror, which had access to channels like this.

'I mean, it doesn't really matter… '

Because only a few people, including Miss Kim Mi-Young, had access to the channel…

- Mr. Ki-Young? Is that really you?

'Who else would I be?'

"Yes," I answered.

- You're safe. I-I'm really glad.

"I'm fine, but Mr. Hyun-Sung…" I paused.

- I'm… *Heuk*… I'm sorry.

'Don't cry, man. The others are listening. You need to show them how dignified and strong you are. Show them that you've matured mentally, man.'

- I'm… really sorry. I'm sorry for messing things up again… for running away and hiding.

"You don't have to apologize. Just the fact that you've woken up is enough to make me feel relieved," I said.

- I'm really sorry for giving you a hard time. I'm really sorry… for not being helpful. I'm sorry for not carrying your burdens. A-All I did was hide. I think I ran from reality and ignored what was before me. I told you that I would carry your burdens with you, but all I did was run and ignore the things before me. In the end… I-I didn't do anything.

'I got it… just stop now, man. The others are listening. We're not allowed to chit-chat on this channel.'

"*Ha… haha…*"

I understood his desire to explain how he overcame those difficult times, but I didn't know how to react besides laughing awkwardly.

- I thought I woke up on my own, but I believe it was your message that woke me up.

'Ah, shit… I want to leave this channel.'

If I were now, I was sure someone would ask me about who would command the troops a minute later. If Miss Kim Mi-Young and the others at the control tower were quick-witted, they'd leave the channel for five minutes. However, they stayed in the channel, which bothered me because it felt like they were listening to our conversation.

Kim Hyun-Sung was definitely out of it, as he was still talking.

At this point, he had become a different kind of antagonist in my eyes.

- This was all thanks to your message—you told me not to die and to wake up. Thank you very much. I'm really… grateful.

"*Haha…* Well, I was just… Anyway, I'm glad you regained consciousness," I said.

- Also…

'Stop it already. That's enough.'

I had a feeling that he was going to keep going if I kept on listening to him.

I didn't want to stop him since he was so touched, but I had to stop him.

"I think it's best if we save the conversation for later. We have matters we need to deal with, and this isn't a private channel."

It was better to be blunt about it.

- *Ah*… okay.

Kim Hyun-Sung sounded kind of sad, but he was probably aware of his mistake.

“You have no idea how happy I am that you’re back,” I told him.

- W-what I've done is—

‘Ah, there he goes again.’

“I’ll see you later,” I interrupted him.

- Okay.

“Miss Kim Mi-Young?” I called out.

- Yes, sir. I’m here. Congratulations on coming back to life, Guild Master.

- Thank you. It’s been a while, Miss Kim Mi-Young.

- I wanted you two to talk longer, but the situation is bad…

“It’s understandable, and this channel wasn’t created so that we can chit-chat,” I said.

‘You heard me, right?’

-…

‘I'm sure he finally knows that he has made a mistake. Of course, it's forgivable, as he has just woken up.'

I could see Kim Hyun-Sung through the Telescope, and he looked like he was regretting his tirade.

- I’ll head there now.

“You don’t have to come here. I would like you to wait at the castle walls until further instructions, and you’re nearby, anyway,” I instructed him.

- What?

“I’m not banning you from participating in the battle. We’re going to bring the castle walls here,” I told him.

- *Ah…*

- So you knew, sir.

“I wasn’t certain, but I had an idea. I never imagined that all of you would just charge in here. More importantly, I didn’t think Miss Hye-Jin would make such a bold decision…” I said.

- She was having a really hard time.

“…”

Jo Hye-Jin was definitely struggling, and it was evidenced by the fact that she had noticed it. When I recalled how she fought with Dominions during that difficult situation, I couldn't help but start questioning Lee Ji-Hye’s character.

“I’ll send over the data you requested right now. First…” I paused.

- Okay.

“I’ll send you the overall map of the temple. The location of the control room isn’t exact, but I’ll mark the location that’s continuously providing holy power. If we do that…” I trailed off.

- Yes, sir.

“I'm not certain about a few places, as I haven't been to every place in the temple. Additionally, I’ll make sure to send you the location of the current troops. I want you to manage them. How are things at the castle wall?” I asked.

“You've memorized the map of the temple?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

‘The pig doesn’t even remember the time I memorized the directions when we were inside the tutorial dungeon.’

I couldn’t draw arrows like I did in the tutorial dungeon, but one would naturally memorize a route they had been using for a long time. Obviously, I couldn’t draw the

map, but I could visualize it.

- I received it, sir.

“How are things at the castle wall?” I asked.

- They're done preparing for battle. In case the plan fails…

‘Does she have insurance or something?’

I couldn’t help but be happy about the fact that Kim Mi-Young had prepared many things.

- I sent the map of the temple to each unit inside the temple.

‘Yeah, I see it.’

The troops’ movements changed, and it was because the control tower was sending them data. The new generals from the Republic and the powerful beings from the Union were moving as well.

The field commanders on site had to be busy dealing with the new information they suddenly received because they were tapping on their Goddess’ Hand Mirror.

Park Deok-Gu had also decided to pick up the pace.

Alps' unit probably didn’t need this kind of data, but it was better than none. In addition, it showed the real-time location of the troops.

I raised the Telescope and saw every inch of the temple. I was concentrating so much that my eyes twitched for the first time in a while. My head was starting to hurt. Of course, I wasn’t the only one busy.

The control tower was busy dealing with the information that I kept sending them. The battlefield was changing continuously, and the control tower had to make sure that they were sending accurate data to the field commanders.

To make matters worse, everything was happening in real time.

I wasn't looking at it through the Telescope, but I could imagine what the control

tower looked like right now. There were probably people standing in front of hundreds of Goddess' Hand Mirrors and were continuously tapping the air with their fingers.

"Deok-Gu, give me a few of the hand mirrors. Give me yours," I instructed.

"O-Okay," Park Deok-Gu stuttered.

I had to keep sending support; my fingers moved busily after I suspended a few hand mirrors using magic. I had to guide the Friendship Guild and make sure that they could join the other troops.

I could see Rafael, and it seemed that he had followed my instructions, as I could see him guiding the Friendship Guild.

The heroes of the first life were doing the same thing. They had already reached the second control room and were being surrounded by enemy troops. Fortunately, there were allied troops nearby. The Friendship Guild wasn't a small guild, and their weaker members scattered about to install eyes throughout the temple.

The dark map was starting to light up as more and more data was starting to come into the Goddess' Hand Mirror. The pigeons were shocked, and they were starting to understand the importance of a control tower and how big of a difference it would make, especially in a battle like this.

'Ah, you're asking what your leader is up to? I think he's still fighting.'

It hadn't been that long since I left, so I had to check back later.

'*Ah, there's something I have to check while I still have free time.*'

I sent a private message to Kasugano Yuno, and my hand mirror immediately vibrated.

[The future hasn't changed.]

'Ah, I should take some anesthesia potion and prepare to cry a lot.'

Kim Hyun-Sung would soon stab Lee Ki-Young in the stomach.

CHAPTER 745
TO THE END (4)

“I don’t want you to change, Cherubim[1]*.”*

“What are you trying to say?”

“I’m telling you that you don’t have to make excuses.”

“I didn’t ask you for advice.”

“I didn’t say anything amazing for it to be considered as advice. I’m not forcing you to follow it, and you can ignore it if you want. You always do that anyway.”

“…”

“It seems like many of you have changed.”

“We haven’t changed.”

“No. Thronus, Dominions, and Seraphim have changed as well. I don’t know why, but it was a gradual change. It’s probably because of the long war. Something outside might have influenced you, or someone nearby might have caused it. It could also be because you've witnessed humans die in life-or-death situations. I guess your feelings are understandable, as humans are beautiful.”

“…”

“They’re blinding. Their potential, their limited life, and their desires are all beautiful. I’m sure the others feel the same way because many tend to yearn for the things they don’t have. I thought you were the same, Cherubim. You pretend that’s not the case, but you probably yearn for their imperfection.”

“Your words aren’t worth my time. If that’s what you wanted to say to me, then get out of my face this instant. I don’t plan on responding to any of your bullshit.”

“No, we’re…”

“Am I wrong?”

Now that I was looking back on that conversation, that human might have been right. The reason I stayed quiet for quite a while back then had to be because I was feeling guilty.

Seraphim started acting like a human at one point. No, it was more like he was copying that human, and Dominions started to get interested in their culture.

Dominions spent his days reading every book he could find, or he had decided to watch them live their lives at some point. Thronus was no different. He started learning about the armor, sword, items, and the fighting methods of the humans. Thronus had the weakest body among us, but when our swords clashed, I was really surprised.

He had definitely changed. We had been together for an immeasurable amount of time, but I had never seen or felt them change so fast. The change was sudden, radical, and brilliant. That human might have been right, as it was an undeniable fact that I also wanted to change. Actually, it was highly likely that I had already changed.

“A bond…” I mumbled.

It was a strange tie that connected humans together. I probably changed the moment I took an interest in that tie. They were like the emotions that the two masked humans felt for each other or the emotions that the humans felt on the battlefield while watching each other’s backs. Their recklessness was all because of their bond.

It made people hold the hand of someone who was dying, and it made people sacrifice themselves to protect their comrades. It also made people go to dangerous places for their beloved.

Thronus was probably thinking that we had some kind of bond inside of us, and it was highly likely that Thronus was the only one aware of that tie. Was there really a bond between us? I had been asking myself that question, but I couldn’t find the answer because we were born together, and we existed together.

We had never sacrificed ourselves for each other, and we had never really talked about our feelings for each other. It was true that we argued and debated to the point

that we ended up forming our own factions, but what we had been doing was different from the humans.

I couldn't really describe it, but it wasn't created because of the bonds we had with each other. It wasn't because there was a bond between Seraphim, Thronus, Dominions, and myself.

"…"

"A-are we even connected? Have we ever connected?" I questioned.

'I'm not sure. I can't even answer that, but you shouldn't have changed, Cherubim.'

"Shut… up," I said.

'There needs to be someone who can maintain the balance. As a higher being, it's obviously your job to do that. I'm sure you already know, but humans are unstable, so their managers have to be someone who's not human. Think about why the continent ended up getting ruined, Cherubim. You already know the answer. It's because humans are worshiping their own gods. This dimension started off on the wrong foot."

"…"

'Those gods are taking care of the continent, and they can't free themselves from their emotions; they sympathize with the humans, value them, and even love them. It doesn't make sense, right? That's the reason the continent is in such a mess. The gods should simply be observers with a unique personality. Haha. Those gods have always interfered with the lives of those mortals.'

"…"

'We did have an event to decrease the population, didn't we? Historically, the continent has always been like that. There have been humans who were born to experience natural disasters, wars, demon invasions, and more. It's those gods that always stopped those crises. They suppressed themselves and made sure not to interfere directly, but they always did their best to protect the humans indirectly.

"They granted holy swords to warriors, calmed natural disasters, and granted wisdom to humans for the sake of helping them avoid their fate. They're also unstable beings. They know what's good for the continent, but they end up ruining everything all

because they're moving based on their emotions.'

"…"

'That shouldn't happen anymore. If you seek to change as well, then the continent will be no different from before, Cherubim.'

"I-I won't listen to your words, you dirty demon," I said.

My vision became blurry, and I couldn't help but smile bitterly because the masked illusion kept on talking to me. I thought I would be able to get out of it because I was different, but I realized that it wasn't that easy. The advice he had given me long ago had definitely been carved into my head.

The demon's sly tongue was still tormenting me.

'But you've changed, Cherubim. You changed in the end.'

"I-It's because it felt like I was following your orders. It put me in a bad mood," I stuttered.

'Well, the reason doesn't really matter. The important thing is that you've changed, Cherubim.'

I saw the masked man approaching me while smiling. I knew it was an illusion, but I had to get up while stumbling and swing my scythe. Obviously, the illusion disappeared the moment I swung my scythe at it.

'That's why you're dying.'

"Bullshit," I said.

'It wouldn't have ended this way if you remembered everything I told you before. Your strange obsession with ties is holding you back. You should swing your scythe toward Seraphim rather than toward me. Can you really *not do that?'*

"I'm sure… I told you that… I don't want to listen to your words," I said.

'If I wanted you to die, then I would have taken into account that rebellious personality of yours. Haha.'

“T-That's true, but I'm different, you dirty demon. I-I didn’t fall for that sly tongue of yours. I cut off Seraphim’s head because I wanted to do so. No matter how much you want to make a fool out of me, that truth will never change,” I told him.

‘How come?’

“I don’t know either,” I replied.

‘I think I know. You mumbled it earlier. You mentioned Seraphim, Dominions, Thronus, and yourself. This bond you have with them must’ve been carved inside you. Brothers… born together and destined to share the same fate. That strange bond you have with your brothers and sisters is what brought you down, Cherubim.’

“…”

‘But you know, I think I told you this before, but… '

“…”

‘The dictionary meaning of the word bond is the relationship between two people based on shared feelings, interests, or experiences. It can also mean the connection between two or more objects. Unfortunately, I don’t think Seraphim thought that he had a bond with you, Cherubim. Haha.’

“…”

‘I think a bond is only meaningful when it goes both ways. Emotions are meaningful because of communication. Regardless of the depth of the bond that you think you have with the others, it's meaningless if they don't feel the same way. It’s basically no different from you saying that you have a bond with a wall. In the end, your death will serve no purpose. I told you… ’

“…”

‘I told you that you shouldn’t have changed by yourself, and you shouldn't have tried to become whole. In the end, you’re an idiot as well. Anyway, you don’t look so good. Are you regretting it?’

“No… I-I don’t have any regrets,” I answered.

I asked myself again, but my answer remained the same. I wasn't sad or heartbroken. I felt kind of numb, actually. If I were asked if there was one thing I regretted, I would say that I regretted not cutting off that demon's tongue.

That was it, and I didn't regret anything else. I didn't regret not stopping Seraphim and killing him. I had no idea why, and I couldn't explain my current emotions.

'But what's up with that look, then?'

My current emotions were probably born from my curiosity. I was satisfied by the fact that I had resisted that demon's words and had taken a step forward somehow, but I still had questions.

"Bond," I said.

I still had no idea what it meant.

'You'll probably never know what it means.'

Probably…

'It's pretty funny. Your personal curiosity is your final regret, not the fact that you couldn't fulfill your dream.'

I didn't expect that either, but my remaining task would be fulfilled because we were born to be tools.

'My heart breaks knowing that no one will shed a tear for you.'

It was unnecessary to dwell on such things, and I wasn't afraid of it—I wasn't afraid of disappearing just like this. No, it wasn't just me—we had never really been afraid of death, and we were willing to accept it. Humans would never understand it, though.

It was unfortunate, but it would have been nice if I had decided to live the life I wanted.

I didn't think that it would happen, but his words had bound me.

Regardless of whether he wanted me to change or not, I would curse him.

'There's no denying that you'll experience a terrible death, and you still won't get what you want.'

Booom!

"*Haha*. It won't… go your way," I said, laughing.

A loud explosion woke me up, and I looked around. I was out of energy, but I stood up because I heard a familiar voice. It wasn't the voice that I wanted to hear, but I was glad to hear it.

"Bluey? What the hell? You're not dead, are you?" asked the feminine voice.

"…"

"I don't know what happened, but you look fine," said the feminine voice.

"I'm sorry," I apologized.

"Well, it's not like I have a lot of free time to help others with their issues. Is this enough? *Ah*… it hurts more than I thought," the feminine voice said.

"You're a fool," I said.

"I could say the same to you. Are you ready?" asked the feminine voice.

"Yeah," I replied.

"Anything else you want to say?"

"No."

The red beast decided to hurt herself.

"Looks like the ending won't be that bad," I said.

The red beast might have the same feelings as me.

1. Cherubim’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 746
TO THE END (5)

“You’ve prepared a lot,” I[1] said.

- It would be impossible without you, Sub Guild Master.

‘Our Miss Kim Mi-Young always knows what to say to make me feel better.’

She was right, though. If I weren't here, they wouldn't achieve much.

“How’s Ha-Yan doing?” I asked.

- She’s been channeling her spell.

“Great timing,” I commented.

- I'm not sure, but she should make it in time.

However, it would take two to tango. Things wouldn't have worked out so well if it hadn't been for our solid and visionary command center.

I turned to observe the ongoing situation while tapping on the Goddess’ Hand Mirror.

The holy power that had enveloped the entire northern region was thinning out. I questioned it, but Jung Ha-Yan had made the right decision. Only one small area of the entire northern region was devoid of holy power, but I was certain that Jung Ha-Yan would have no issues casting her spell.

I was sure the control tower had similar thoughts as me, but…

‘They probably want to get confirmation, just in case.’

I was also unwilling to gamble in a situation like this.

“I’ll send the retreat route to the troops done with their tasks. I want the command center to create a party using the additional troops. Then, I want them to send that party to the unfinished sectors,” I ordered.

- Yes, sir.

‘Most of the smaller tasks are done. Are the bigger tasks the only thing left?’

Ji-Hye noona would take care of the drama that Dominions and Jo Hye-Jin were filming…

I wasn't feeling like I was running out of time, as I could feel that the pigeons hadn't established their control tower just yet. I could even feel a few troops just wandering around, clearly lost. Just like how Cherubim and Seraphim were fighting each other, the elder pigeons were definitely fighting each other as well.

I was sure they were discussing the identity of the culprit, who had told the humans of the temple's location.

- The operation is a success.

‘Great.’

- The Friendship Guild is done with its mission and has rejoined the troops. Mr. Rafael is moving with them as well.

‘That’s good news.’

- The Garosh, Cash, and Miju Love Guilds have also reached their destination. They’re fighting with the enemy at the moment, and the troops from the Republic are planning on joining them.

‘I know. I’m watching them.’

- The 67th region is done with its mission.

“Acknowledged,” I said.

- The Black Swan Guild has completed their mission and has decided to return to base. Should I give them—

“No, just make sure that the Black Swan Guild will return as soon as possible,” I answered.

- Okay.

The holy power in the air was starting to become really thin.

“Send me a report once you notice anything,” I ordered.

- Yes, sir.

An unexpected report came in.

- Sir, I received a report that the Mercenary Queen and Cherubim are going to start fighting each other soon. I received a message not to send reinforcements, but…

“What? When…” I asked.

- Just now.

‘What the heck?’

Cherubim and Seraphim’s intense battle had ended a lot faster than I expected.

‘Did the blue-haired pigeon win?’

I thought they were going to fight for at least a few hours, but I had to acknowledge the fact that my plan was in a mess now.

I turned my attention elsewhere and saw that Miss Kim Mi-Young was right: Cha Hee-Ra and Cherubim were looking at each other. I had no idea what was going on, but my eyes focused on Cherubim’s current condition. He seemed injured—no, he was dying. I looked around, but I didn’t see Seraphim.

I immediately realized what was going on.

‘Seraphim won. Hee-Ra noona came to finish the job.’

There was a small problem, and the problem was that she was hurting herself.

"Ah..."

- Excuse me?

"No, it's nothing," I said.

'Ah, why are you doing cool stuff again, noona? All you need to do is finish him off.'

"..."

'What are you going to do if you lose?'

Obviously, I didn't think she was going to lose. As I said earlier, Cherubim looked like he was dying. I wasn't sure if Cha Hee-Ra had noticed it yet, but Cherubim wasn't recovering from his injuries. Technically, he could do something to recover from his injuries, but he was ruining that possibility himself.

It was like when a candle was about to go out, it would burn brightly for some reason. I honestly thought that Hee-Ra noona looked cool, but there was no need for her to injure herself just to ensure that the upcoming fight between her and Cherubim would be fair.

'I'm really the only person who cares about the continent.'

Cha Hee-Ra looked like a gamer who had deliberately chosen the hardest difficulty because it was fun to get stomped. I was truly surprised by her decision, as the fate of the continent basically depended on the outcome of their battle.

- *Haha!* This is fun, Bluey.

-...

However, I was in awe staring at them fight. The fight even made me question Cha Hee-Ra's humanity.

Cha Hee-Ra's eyes were becoming bloodshot, and I could tell that she was letting herself go. She was definitely getting ready to let loose, as she was becoming less talkative, and I couldn't hear anything else other than explosions and screams.

They were no longer fighting with skills and were just going at each other using the

power of their fleshly body alone.

Cherubim was grinning for some reason, but it probably meant that he was feeling some sort of connection with Cha Hee-Ra.

I was convinced that the two were feeling the same emotions that Jin Cheong and I had felt for each other on the battlefield.

They were probably praising and were in awe of each other. They respected each other for being on the same level as them, and they probably felt gratified by the fact that they could enjoy this kind of fight.

However, their expressions became more somber as the battle went on. I was certain that it was because they knew that the end was coming. The battle would inevitably end, and they probably thought it was a pity, as they were genuinely enjoying their fight.

Of course, the others probably thought otherwise.

Boom!

Crack!

There was a small problem, and it was the fact that…

'The research facility is going to waste.'

However, the vicinity wasn't the only place that was getting destroyed—no, they weren't simply destroying everything around them. Their fight was changing the topography itself. The research facility had already lost its previous glorious form, and it told me just how calm was the fight between Seraphim and Cherubim compared to this battle.

-…

- You seem to be enjoying it.

- What are you saying, Red Beast?

- You're smiling right now, Bluey. Are you enjoying this?

- I don’t understand you.

No, Cherubim definitely understood Cha Hee-Ra's words.

Booom!

He probably had no choice but to acknowledge it.

- What should we do, Sub Guild Master?

“Send reinforcements and make sure that the enemy won't receive any reinforcements. However, I don’t think they’ll have the luxury to worry about them anyway…” I ordered.

Cherubim's grin grew wider as time went on. He had already put his long hair down, and he seemed like he no longer cared about his hairstyle. He no longer seemed to care about looking neat or in the accessories attached to his face and body.

A large scythe and axe clashed in mid-air.

Cherubim's weapon flew out of his hand, but he immediately headbutted Cha Hee-Ra.

- *Hahahaha!*

Cha Hee-Ra did the same. She grabbed Cherubim's long hair and smashed her elbow on Cherubim's face.

Kaboom!

A powerful explosion echoed, but the two didn’t retreat. The word *exciting* wasn’t enough to describe their battle. It looked like I was staring at a fight between beasts rather than a fight between a human being and an angel.

They looked like beasts that one could only find in myths.

Cherubim called Cha Hee-Ra a red beast, but he also looked like a beast in my eyes—a blue beast, to be exact.

Cherubim gave it his all, and he looked like he was pouring out everything that he

had been suppressing all this time. I thought he was the epitome of calmness, but it seemed that I was wrong. He had always been the same as Hee-Ra noona. The two of them were a blazing flame that would never be extinguished.

I couldn't understand how he had been suppressing that fire. Cherubim once said that they weren't born with personalities, but I didn't think that was true. Unfortunately, even Cherubim's eternal fire was about to be extinguished, as he had gone beyond his limits.

'You're not going to lose, right, Hee-Ra noona?'

They were fighting, but Cherubim was on the losing side. Cherubim could no longer get up upon collapsing to the ground. He sprawled out on the ground, looking pitiful. The red beast spat out spit mixed with blood and smoke to the blue beast on the ground.

I thought Cha Hee-Ra would start mocking him, but she looked unusually serious.

- How unfortunate.

The scene was markedly different from when Jin Cheong and I fought each other.

- You're right… it's unfortunate, Red Beast.

- So, are you feeling better?

- Yeah, maybe.

- How are you feeling?

- I don't really know either. We don't really make a big deal about disappearing or dying, but… I think I understand why humans are obsessed with the inevitable end. However, I don't have regrets. It also feels like I've gotten things out of my system… Also, a bond… Yeah, I think I finally understand what a bond is.

- A bond?

- I can't really describe it, but it felt like you and I had a bond. We've never really talked to each other, and it's actually hilarious to feel that way for a human like you, but that was all I thought about while we were fighting. Actually, no, I'm just talking

bullshit since I'm dying, so don't worry about it.

- I felt something similar. I don't know exactly what you're talking about, but I won't deny the fact that you and I are similar. If I had to analyze this, you could say we had a bond… However, I would like to say this again: we're the same, Bluey.

- The same…

- That's right. I knew it the moment I saw you, and your condition right now is proof of that. Your innate nature isn't something you can hide, and I don't think this nature was something you acquired later. Well, it's proof that you guys had it all along.

- We weren't designed to be born that way, but…

- I don't care about that. We're the same, and that's why you felt that bond you told me just now. It's the same for me. I think I felt the same thing as you. I wanted to fight you even longer, so this is pretty sad.

- Yeah, it… is… sad.

- Should I stay with you until you die? That's the least I can do.

- *Ha… haha.* You don't need to do that. I just want to close my eyes like this. I don't want to say this is my will, but… since we're the same… I have a favor to ask.

- What is it?

- A favor…

- You're pretty bold. I normally don't grant favors just because we're the same.

- I know… it's dishonorable, but… please take care… of my brothers…

-…

-…

- That's… beyond my abilities, Bluey.

-…

-…

- It… can’t be helped.

Cherubim muttered while staring at the ceiling. I had no idea what that blue beast was thinking or why he was mumbling those words, but he didn't stop mumbling.

- Seraphim, Dominions, Thronus, and me… *Ha… haha…*

-…

- Seraphim… Dominions, Thronus, and me…

-…

- Seraphim, Dominions… Thro… nus… a-and me…

The blue beast turned toward somewhere…

- Sera… Domi… Nus… me…

- So we are the same.

- Thro… nus… and…

I followed his gaze and saw my worn-out bag in the middle of the beautiful ruins where the fierce battle between him and Cha Hee-Ra had taken place.

‘Ah, I think my anesthesia potion is in there… ’

---

1. Lee Ki-Young’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 747
TO THE END (5)

'This is bad… I think I really left it behind.'

I tried my best to focus on Cherubim's final moments, who died while calling out for his brothers, but I couldn't focus on anything when I saw the bag near him. The bag was in such bad shape that it had lost its original form, and it looked like it was representing my feelings. I didn't have to look inside to know that everything inside of it had been destroyed, as there was no way anything inside the bag would have survived after the research center enveloped by holy power was destroyed.

Cha Hee-Ra turned around and started walking away, but she came to a halt upon noticing my bag and started rummaging inside of it.

'Ah… now that I think about it, she wanted a bag, too.'

I was happy because it felt like she was checking my bag in my place.

If the items were still intact, then there would be hope…

- *Ah…* it's just a rag.

Cha Hee-Ra hurled the bag away as if she was telling me that it was hopeless. I decided not to send her a message, as I already knew the outcome. One of Kim Hyun-Sung's collections had already lost its function as a bag, and Cha Hee-Ra was right; the bag had become nothing more than a piece of rag.

'Man… my alchemist kit was in that bag.'

I wanted to make another one, but I couldn't do that right now.

'It was a Legendary alchemist kit… Some Dragon Breath Potions and Light Bomb Potions were in there as well.'

Actually, that part wasn't that bad because I didn't want to get into a situation where

I had to use an offensive potion in the first place. The most important thing was the anesthesia potion.

'Ah, shit. What should I do?'

What if I just went in without it? It probably wasn't even necessary, right? It wasn't like it would be my first time experiencing that kind of pain. During the Ito Sota incident, I went all-in without drinking an anesthesia potion. Rolling around would reduce the pain as well, and it wasn't that difficult to do.

However, I was different from the past Lee Ki-Young. I honestly had no idea how I acted in the beginning when I was just desperately trying to survive. People would change once they started having food on the table and were starting to live a good life.

It had been a while since I felt any pain as Light Ki-Young, so I wasn't looking forward to getting stabbed.

'Wait, didn't I leave one in my room?'

"What's wrong? Did something happen?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"There's no problem… Anyway, I need to stop by somewhere," I answered.

"Is it close? I think Ha-Yan noonim is going to cast her spell soon… Actually, you should know that better than me," Park Deok-Gu said.

"It's not that far from here anyway. Let's do it quickly," I told him.

"*Ahem*. Hearing you talk like that makes me think that you have something up your sleeve," Park Deok-Gu commented.

'I do, actually.'

It would help me regulate my emotions. If the pain ended up being too much for me to withstand, I wouldn't be able to focus on setting up the stage or crying when necessary.

I would just spend the entire time screaming in pain, and I wouldn't be able to even say goodbye.

'Ah, shit. Now that I think about it… Cherubim was amazing.'

I would have rolled around in pain if I were in his shoes.

"How much time do we have left exactly?" he asked.

"About an hour," I answered.

"That should be enough," he said.

'It's probably there, right?'

I wasn't sure if the pigeons had already searched my room, but the anesthesia potion was definitely safe because I hid it myself. There was no way they would find it.

I tapped Park Deok-Gu's arm, and he changed directions like a bull.

It didn't take long for him to reach my room.

"Where is it?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"We're almost there," I answered.

I entered my room in a hurry and started looking around.

As expected, the pigeons had searched my room. It no longer looked like a room, but I didn't really care about what would happen to this room. I struck a certain part of the ground, and the floor split open, revealing a small chest.

Park Deok-Gu definitely found my room interesting because he was looking around.

"Is this where you hid it?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"Yeah. I got a few in case of an emergency," I answered.

Three Dragon Breath potions and one Light Bomb potion…

I had also prepared a variety of items aside from those, and I stored all of them inside this chest. It was actually very tiny, but it made me happy.

'As expected. Those prepared to seize victory will seize it. Looks like there's another bag in here.'

The problem was that I couldn't find the anesthesia potion, and I searched deeper in case it was hidden underneath, but I couldn't find the green-colored potion at all.

'Why the hell isn't it here?'

I had the advanced healing potion and mana recovery potion. There was also an advanced potion set and various potions that had never been sold to the public as well as survival kits and even a few catalysts.

'Where did it go?'

I thought I had somehow forgotten it, but there was no way I would forget to bring with me such a crucial component, so I thought harder, and that was when it dawned on me.

"Wow, shit…" I mumbled.

"What's wrong?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"This is… absurd…" I said.

"Is something wrong?" he asked.

'Lee Ji-Hye, you bitch… '

She obviously took it away.

"Man, what is up with her… seriously… This is just wrong. There's a thing called business ethics…" I complained.

I turned and saw Dominions on the ground covered in wounds.

Jo Hye-Jin also looked injured. There had definitely been an intense fight between them while I wasn't watching. Actually, they were still fighting each other.

- R-Run, Miss Hye-Jin.

- I can’t do that.

‘You guys have made a lot of progress. You went to the point where the stolen soul came out and ran away? Is that part of the story? Isn’t this just copying Doom Ki-Young? Are you sure it fits the story? Does it make sense for a stolen soul to suddenly enter Dominions’ body?’

- Run away while I’m suppressing this body. Hurry.

- I will never do that.

‘Ah, shit. You’re so despicable.’

How could someone be that despicable? I had an idea as to what was happening. Ji-Hye noona had a low pain tolerance, so it was unnatural to see her move with so many holes in her body.

Even if Dominions and Lonovera were sharing the pain, there was no way Lee Ji-Hye could endure that much pain. However, Lee Ji-Hye wasn't trembling in pain, which meant that she had definitely drunk my anesthesia potion.

Of course, Lee Ji-Hye was acting like she was trembling in pain, but I knew her true colors, so all I could say was that she really looked despicable.

- You don’t need to sacrifice for me, Miss Hye-Jin. Like this man said, I-I…

- There isn’t anyone in the world who doesn’t deserve to live. I believe that.

‘Don’t fall for it, Hye-Jin. You… should see how much of a sly fox she really is… I detest her so much that I’m disgusted… ’

- You told me this, Miss Ji-Hye.

‘What did she tell you?’

- That sometimes…

‘What did she say?’

- Even if you don’t feel it yourself, there are things others can feel.

'Look at that obnoxious gaze of hers.'

- You said there are times when we think we know ourselves the best, but that's not always the case… That's what you told me.

- That's…

- I couldn't really understand what you meant when you told me that, but I think I understand now. I'm sure the sub guild master, I mean, Ki-Young, feels the same way.

First of all, I liked the fact that she mentioned me. The way she talked about me even made me feel that she was truly treating me as a friend.

- He says that he's someone who doesn't know how to compromise, but he's more caring and more responsible than anybody else. He knows how to sacrifice for others and is aware of what it means to compromise.

'Ah, this is worth listening to.'

- It's the same for you. You belittle yourself, but you're more amazing and more necessary than you think. You're also more considerate and warm-hearted than you think.

'That's not true. She's not considerate at all. If she were considerate, she wouldn't have taken the anesthesia potion away.'

- That's… not true.

- No, I'm right. I'm saying that because I'm sure of it. There's no need to belittle yourself, and you shouldn't think of yourself in that way. You also told me that you enjoyed listening to others, and I know that you can get out of it. I'll help you get out.

Jo Hye-Jin charged at Dominions again with her spear in tow. Their drama was definitely in the climax now, as Dominions was showing his true self.

I was shocked to see Lee Ji-Hye crying and telling Jo Hye-Jin that she didn't need to do all this while Jo Hye-Jin was telling her that she'd save her no matter what. I was at a loss for words.

'Why is she not considerate of other people's feelings?'

Jo Hye-Jin looked like she wasn't being swayed, but she was being swayed in my eyes. She seemed determined, but she was barely hanging on.

Lee Ji-Hye didn't seem to be wavering. She kept telling Jo Hye-Jin to either run away or that she was fine now, but she didn't look fine at all. Actually, I was shocked because she was just acting.

'Shit, what am I going to do about the anesthesia potion?'

If Lee Ji-Hye had truly drank the last bottle, then I would have no other choice left.

- *Haa… haa…*

- Miss… Hye-Jin… I can… no longer…

Lee Ji-Hye probably didn't know that I was feeling this way because she was focused on filming a sad scene. I didn't understand what was going on. I knew the overall mood was a sad one, but I couldn't keep up with the story development.

One thing I was sure of was that the room Jo Hye-Jin and Lee Ji-Hye were in was the final control room. I was quick-witted, so I couldn't help but think that Lee Ji-Hye had led Jo Hye-Jin to that room.

'Ah, shit. It's about to start.'

Before I could come up with another plan, Jo Hye-Jin made her move.

I heard a loud noise and received Miss Kim Mi-Young's message.

- The operation was a success.

'Wait, I don't think we should be ending things yet.'

I turned my attention elsewhere and saw Jung Ha-Yan casting her spell.

-…!!!

As soon as she raised her staff, a surreal sight unfolded before me. A colossal magic circle manifested, covering the entire northern region, and a large castle wall appeared slowly. I saw the heroes on the castle wall as well as the leaders of the

continent.

- Let’s go! Heroes of light! Protect the continent!

Oscar, the leader of the Sacred Democratic Country, held her sword up high and jumped down the wall before anyone else.

‘No, not yet.’

- For Goddess Benigoa! Kill them all!

Father Basel roared energetically, even though he looked like he was going to pass out at any moment. The holy knights responded to Father Basel's roar and joined the battle with determined faces.

‘Wait… ’

- It’s time to return the favor.

It had been a long time since I saw Pristina, the Queen of Neutral Nation Laios.

‘What’s wrong with you guys? Why are you acting like this? If you wanted to return the favor, you shouldn’t have come here.’

- We'll win! We're not going to lose.

The President of the Republic looked like he had been looking forward to this as he started shouting.

- For true union!

‘Don’t unify anything just yet.’

Even Elias of the Elf Kingdom was here…

- We've been ignoring the plight of the continent for quite a while now. Let’s stand up and fight to make up for the time we lost.

‘No, just forget about it.’

It would have been great if they hadn't come here, but even the dragons were here.

-…

To make matters worse, Kim Hyun-Sung even raised his sword with determination. He then nodded while staring at his sword, seemingly having made up his mind.

'Shit… now is not the right time, you bastards. It's not time yet… Hyun-Sung, I'm not ready yet. Not yet… '

The sword Kim Hyun-Sung had thrust into the sky looked more threatening than usual.

- Let's win.

'Not yet… '

A surreal war that one was supposed to only hear in myths was unfolding right in front of my eyes.

"Shit…"

CHAPTER 748
TO THE END (6)

I was so surprised to see many dragons in the sky that I questioned if the continent truly had this many dragons all this while. Dozens of angels were fighting against the dragons in the air, creating a marvelous sight.

It was a sight more marvelous than one would see in movies, as the sight above me wasn't computer-generated.

More and more angels took to the skies to fight the dragons, and I could see that the dragons were struggling against the angels. Fortunately, the elves were around, and they shot arrows at the angels. Some of the angels that were getting closer to the dragons fell to the ground, and the dragons used their fangs and claws to rip the falling angels apart.

A few dragons also unleashed their dragon breath, melting a few pigeons on the spot.

Despite that, I couldn't really say that we had the advantage. A few dragons had also fallen to the ground. I wasn't sure if I ought to feel relieved, but Dialugia seemed fine; just like the other dragons, she sprayed her dragon breath all around her.

The dwarves and other races raised their swords and axes and jumped down the wall. It made me feel like the allied forces were going all-out, and it made sense because the outcome of this war would decide the fate of the continent.

- Let’s show those demons our power! We must make them realize that we’re strong as one!

- Attack! Attack!

- Don’t stop shooting! Keep shooting those arrows!

- Don’t retreat! This is the final battle!

The battlefield was the entire northern region, so I couldn't see the entire battlefield,

even with my Telescope. To make matters worse, massive battles were happening at the same time in every nook and cranny of the northern region.

The troops of the Sacred Democratic Country and the holy knights of the Vatican were fighting the pigeons while exuding holy power, while the troops of the Republic cast their magic haphazardly and orderly at the same time.

I heard a series of loud explosions, and I could see a kaleidoscope of colors everywhere I looked, which made the battlefield look colorful and beautiful. I couldn't really describe the scene before me, and I could only watch in awe as the heroes of the continent fought the pigeons with all their might.

“Hyung-nim, we should get going as well,” Park Deok-Gu urged.

‘I know, damn it.’

Perhaps it was just me, but it felt like every situation was pressuring me to sacrifice myself. I was trying to buy some time, but the Park-Ki-Ri siblings were already prepared to leave, and they started running away before I could even say anything.

‘Ah… I don’t think I have a choice but to go in.’

I wanted to find another way, but I couldn’t do that in the current situation.

‘I don’t have time. I need to prepare for it.’

I had no idea when it was going to happen. The scene I had seen through Kasugano Yuno was starting to become a reality. The dragons' appearance was proof that everything was coming together. Hee-Ra noona fighting with a spear sticking out of her hadn't happened yet, but I was sure that she would soon get stabbed.

I couldn't see Rafael either, but he’d probably join the fight outside with the Friendship Guild. Xenogyria and Jung Ha-Yan were the same. Once Jung Ha-Yan recovered her mana, it would only be a matter of time before she joined the battlefield.

- Miss Jung Ha-Yan… you shouldn’t…

- No, I-I-I can do it.

- You shouldn’t do that, Miss Jung Ha-Yan. You must recover more mana.

It seemed like Jung Ha-Yan wanted to join the battle right away, but the old mages around her were trying their best to stop her.

‘Yeah, rest a little more… If an ordinary human had cast a spell like that, I’m a hundred percent sure the spell would kill them. No, I don't think they can even cast such a spell in the first place, as they'll die while channeling it.'

Jung Ha-Yab knew better than anyone that she was pushing herself, and I was sure that Jung Ha-Yan would soon join the battlefield because her mana recovery rate was astoundingly high.

Xenogyria was acting like the final boss because her expression looked grim after she unleashed her troops. I calculated and deduced that Jung Ha-Yan would need three hours to recover her mana—no, maybe she would need five hours.

Five hours could be a long time for some and short for others.

‘Ah, damn it. My anesthesia potion. Shit… ’

I felt a bitter taste in my mouth, as I had ended up in a situation where I had to make a choice, and I rationalized everything in the strangest way. I was even telling myself that it was impossible to convince him to stab me in such a short amount of time or that perhaps Kasugano Yuno was changing the future.

The problem was that it had to be done at the right time, and even if I had to be rude to Kim Hyun-Sung—he had to stab me.

‘I still haven't figured out what I should say to him. Things are happening too fast; I can't think of anything, and it's going to be strange if I just wing it. I can’t just go up to him and tell him that I’m the masked scum. There's no way he'll believe me. He’ll just shake his head rather than stab me.

'I need more time. Shit, is no one going to help me? I need enough time to build up to that moment… ’

Obviously, I had someone who could help me. I knew a pigeon who had memories of his first life pretty well, but if he saw Kim Hyun-Sung…

'Hyun-Sung might lose again.'

It wasn't like I had no trust in our regressor, but Seraphim was basically his counter. I was worried that he would obtain new holes in his body before he could even speak. Of course, Kim Hyun-Sung no longer had the face of a monster, but…

'It's still not enough.'

Even if Kim Hyun-Sung ended up fighting Seraphim… I wasn't sure if he'd tell stories about the past and go on a tirade about what had happened in the first life… It was possible, of course, as he was surprisingly talkative, but…

I wondered if I really had to gamble on something like that. I thought it would be more reasonable for me to find another way. I would make Kim Hyun-Sung stay away from Seraphim for as long as possible, but I had to find a different way to get stabbed.

If I had to find someone else to face him…

'I wonder who I could use.'

Who wouldn't feel guilty about it?

'Jung Ha-Yan?'

She could be useful. She was feeling guilty because of what happened to Han Sora, but she was pretty shameless. I was convinced that only a few platinum-colored swords would appear even if her sins were judged.

The problem was…

'She still has to recover her mana, and it will take her a few hours.'

The timing would be difficult to arrange, so I decided to think about other methods, but I could only think of one.

I turned slowly and saw the battlefield once again. Overall, it seemed like the allied forces were pushing the pigeons back, but no one could guarantee the outcome.

Humanity had decided to go all-in, unlike before when only a few guerilla skirmishes

had been taking place, so the pigeons couldn't afford to look down on the allied forces.

Even without Seraphim, these pigeons had definitely established a control tower of their own volition. Soon, the pigeons started moving in a more organized manner as if they wanted to prove to me that my assumptions were correct.

- For… Varian.

- Reinforcements! We need reinforcements!

The situation was changing little by little.

'I have no choice but to do it if I want to protect the continent.'

Finding a way was an optional issue, as I would have to sacrifice myself, anyway.

I turned again and saw Kim Hyun-Sung killing the angels. My jaw dropped because he was single-handedly changing the battlefield.

'Wow… our Hyun-Sung is definitely strong.'

Kim Hyun-Sung had definitely decided to believe in himself a little because he was fighting with determination. He wasn't using Lucifer's power anymore; he was using his own power to fight. I was worried that he might lose himself again, but he started talking as if to reassure me that everything was fine.

- Mr. Ki-Young, where are you?

"I'm leaving with Deok-Gu right now. We're going to reach the control tower soon, so you don't have to worry. You don't have to come here either. Just stay on that side of the battlefield…"

- Are you really okay?

"Yes, we're almost there. I'm going to meet up with the Mercenary Queen as well, so don't worry and focus on the battle. The situation isn't that bad, so don't leave and just stay there…"

- This place is going to be fine.

'That's not true. That place needs a lot of help.'

To be honest, that part of the battlefield didn't really need him anymore, as he had already taken out the named pigeon assigned to that part of the battlefield.

Kim Hyun-Sung knew how to fight efficiently on this kind of battlefield. He knew that fighting the high-ranking pigeons would be more beneficial for the battlefield than fighting ordinary pigeons. Actually, I was sure he was thinking that he had to do something more impactful than killing high-ranking pigeons.

As expected, he nodded and started talking about it.

- Seraphim's location…

'Shit… '

"I'm not sure. I haven't received any confirmation," I answered.

I actually knew, but…

'If I tell him and he gets beaten up again, we'll go back to square one… '

- You don't have to worry.

"It's not that I'm worried…"

-…

"It's more of a probability issue. You cannot defeat Seraphim. It's not a good match-up. I already formed a unit that'll head there to deal with him, so I think it's best if you focus on a different region," I suggested.

'The holy sword warrior's party should be ready, and Rafael is in great condition. too.'

- No, it's fine. I can defeat him.

'No, you can't beat him. You'll never be able to beat him. Remember when I told you that I've forgiven your sins? That was a bunch of bullshit. I can't do anything about the sins you've committed. I only told you that to make you feel relieved, but it's all temporary.'

People like Kim Hyun-Sung would find it difficult to recover from such wounds, and I wanted to tell him that he was mistaken if he thought the sword of judgment wouldn't fall on him.

“It’s impossible. I think it’s best if we talk later. I’ll call you again after I reach the control tower. Orders will be coming from the command center, so please remain at the front line until then,” I instructed.

- I’m sure I can win.

‘Yeah, yeah, I’m sure you can win. I guess you're really thinking that you’re the protagonist because you're acting like one. Do you really think you can defeat the enemy that already gave you a few knuckle sandwiches to eat by fighting them again? Real life is different and cold, man. A no is a no. I’m not saying this because I’m afraid of getting stabbed. It’s because you really can't beat him.’

And that was when Kim Hyun-Sung continued talking with a serious face.

- If you help me… I can win.

“…”

He wasn’t saying that he could win if I cheered for him.

- There’s no way I’d lose with you on my side.

I understood immediately what he meant, and I started tapping on my thigh while calculating his chances of winning. In the end, I reached one conclusion: his chances weren't too bad.

‘He has a great chance.’

It was worth a try.

‘I can dispatch the holy sword warrior’s party if things get bad in the middle of the battle.’

However, I was sure Kim Hyun-Sung wouldn't lose in any battle if I were there to give him orders, so I was sure that the holy sword warrior's party wouldn't have to get involved.

I turned to Park Deok-Gu and said, “Deok-Gu.”

“Are you done talking?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

“Let me sit on that shield of yours,” I told him.

“Are you… telling me to run while carrying you?” he questioned.

“Just until we reach the command center. There aren’t any enemies nearby anyway,” I answered.

“But still…”

“Just do as you’re told. Also, tell your troops to bring all their Goddess’ Hand Mirrors and ask Miss Jung-Yeon to levitate them in front of me…” I ordered.

“Yes, sir,” Hwang Jung-Yeon said.

“*Ah*, I’m glad you’re here. So…”

“Yes?”

“Please levitate the Goddess’ Hand Mirrors in front of me. I’ll be checking them while moving, so please make sure that those mirrors will hover firmly in front of me,” I instructed.

“Okay.”

I saw the hand mirrors floating slowly, and light started flashing on those hand mirrors. I saw Kim Hyun-Sung slowly catching his breath through the Telescope, and then he suddenly smiled as if he was ready.

“It’s kind of far,” I said.

- Okay.

“I’ll tell you the locations,” I said.

- I'm looking forward to working with you.

“Me, too,” I told him.

One glance was enough for me to see the entire battlefield, and it was all thanks to the hand mirrors before me.

CHAPTER 749
TO THE END (7)

I[1] saw the vast battlefield, and it was the entire northern region.

More specifically, I could see the map of the entire northern region. I couldn't tell where exactly everything was, but one thing I was sure of was that all of that was prepared for one hero who was on the screen. It was an incomprehensible sight.

'What is he planning on doing?'

I couldn't understand why Father Lee Ki-Young was staring at a map of the entire battlefield, why he was talking to the Guild Master of the Blue Guild, and why the old members of the Blue Guild looked so excited. I had heard of it, though. Mister Park—I mean, Leader Park, would always talk about it whenever he was drunk.

"Hyung-nim and the bro are invincible when they work together. There's nothing to worry about. Honestly, I don't know how they're doing it, but with a bang and kaboom, things will be handled quickly, so don't worry so much.'

I obviously had no idea what he was talking about. I would never really listen to him because I thought he was just exaggerating, but the sight before me reminded me of a post on Benigoa Net a long time ago. It was a post written by a guest account, so I thought they were just trolling, but it was taken down minutes later.

It had been such a long time that I had already forgotten the post's content.

'What did the post say again?'

It was about the Guild Master of the Blue Guild during the war with the Republic. To be exact, it was a post written by someone who had experienced the war with him.

'I think it said that Father Lee Ki-Young took control of the entire battlefield using just one person.'

I remembered seeing many comments on the post, but they were just baseless

information. They said things like how the guild master appeared exactly at the same time when they were ordered to cast the spell that they had channeled or about how they fired an arrow randomly, but it ended up hitting the enemy commander's chest.

They commented about the miracles that they had experienced in that battle.

Of course, large guilds all had control towers, and people were well aware of their roles as well. They contributed to both small and large battles; famous guilds usually had competent leaders as well, but…

'They were unrealistic stories.'

Quite a few adventurers thought the same, and I even scoffed at the post.

I wasn't the type to blindly idolize others, after all.

"Are you amazed?" Ahn Ki-Mo asked.

"*Ah!* Mister Ahn… I mean, Commander. I-I'm sorry," I apologized.

"I'm not criticizing you. *Haha*. It is a pretty amazing sight. I'm actually not used to seeing this either, and it's my first time seeing the sub guild master doing something like this. I'm sure it's your first time seeing that as well," Ahn Ki-Mo said.

'He knows?'

"However, I know what those two are trying to achieve," Ahn Ki-Mo continued.

"What?" I asked.

"You'll see," Ahn Ki-Mo said with a smug look.

Ahn Ki-Mo's expressio made me feel like I was the only strange one here.

'What the hell is that?'

I didn't want to say that it was ridiculous, but it was definitely something one wouldn't see everyday.

Father Lee Ki-Young was sitting on a large shield with his legs crossed, while Mister

Park was holding him up as if he were some sort of treasure chest.

The Goddess' Hand Mirror displayed many different scenes, and Miss Hwang Jung-Yeon was making sure that those hand mirrors were staying firmly in the air.

A few layers of defensive shields and protection spells had been cast upon the two to make sure that they wouldn't get interrupted by an ambush. The way they were moving made it seem like they were moving some sort of important cargo. I was trained to hold a shield myself, so I knew just how strenuous such movements were. However, just like that, a makeshift situation room was created.

And that was when the scenery in the screens of the hand mirrors changed abruptly…

'What?'

All eight hand mirrors were displaying something I couldn't quite identify.

'??'

The scenery was passing by pretty quickly, and it was a scenery that one would see if one were looking out the window of a car or a train. The only difference was that the scenery was changing in an unimaginable way. I eventually managed to understand what was going on because of the other hand mirror next to the eight hand mirrors.

That hand mirror depicted a scene seemingly from the point of view of someone moving at an incredible speed.

'Maybe… '

Perhaps that was what the guild master was seeing…

'Really?'

It was definitely the battlefield from the Sunset Swordsman, Kim Hyun-Sung's eyes.

"Ah…"

My jaw dropped because the situation was changing every second.

“Fifth battalion, prepare the healers. Mr. Hyun-Sung, keep moving forward. The coordinates where you can find the named being have been sent along with the path that I expect them to take,” Father Lee Ki-Young said.

The Sunset Swordsman swung his sword, and a demon wearing an angel mask would fall to the ground with each swing of his sword. Then, he would reappear in a different location in the blink of an eye as if he was teleported there.

Another screen showed a third-person point of view above the Sunset Swordsman, and the Sunset Swordsman started shining for some reason.

- Affirmative.

The guild master was staring at a priest of the fifth battalion, who looked shocked.

- N-No way…

‘No way… ’

Before I could hear the priest’s voice through the hand mirror, I saw the Sunset Swordsman moving once again. I could finally understand what the poster of that post was trying to say.

The guild master spread his wings and flew to the sky while swinging his sword non-stop. Meanwhile, multiple beams of light chased after the guild master; the beams of light had come from the demons.

‘Isn’t that dangerous?’

However, the Sunset Swordsman didn’t seem worried. Why?

It was all because he had received an order just a few seconds ago to ignore those beams of light. Father Lee Ki-Young knew that they would attack the Sunset Swordsman, and the Sunset Swordsman trusted Father Lee Ki-Young.

Soon, a large barrier appeared, blocking the demons' light beams, which allowed the Sunset Swordsman to escape the battlefield. The mage, who had cast the protection spell just now, looked shocked as they looked down at their hands.

I could understand what they were feeling, as all they did was cast a protection spell

in the sky based on the timing that was given by the command center. They definitely didn't expect their spell to actually hit something and that it would be the Sunset Swordsman to boot.

The swordsman moved like a madman, and his movements screamed no hesitation.

“Enter the 24th forward base,” Father Lee Ki-Young ordered.

- Anything unusual…

“Go in,” he repeated.

- Understood.

It felt like Father Lee Ki-Young was cornering them.

‘This is dangerous.’

I learned tactics through books, so I could tell that the situation at the 24th forward base was bad. No, it actually felt like the place was overrun by demons wearing angel masks.

Just then, the screens on the hand mirrors became blurry as if they had been enveloped by fog. It was the same for the screen that showed the swordsman’s point of view. The visibility was so low that he couldn't see anything more than three meters away from him.

Of course, I immediately realized why that was happening.

‘The Eight Seats of the Democratic Country. Mist Summoner Cheon Kwan-Wi.’

I was sure it was Father Lee Ki-Young’s order. My jaw dropped upon realizing that Cheon Kwan-Wi had managed to cover the entire base with his mist. I ruffled my hair in shock, as the situation was even more shocking than I thought.

A spell of that size needed ample channeling time.

‘At least ten minutes.’

The minimum was eight minutes. Cheon Kwan-Wi would need a minimum of eight

minutes of channeling time to cast such a massive spell, which meant…

'Father Lee Ki-Young knew all along, so he told the Mist Summoner to start channeling ahead of time.'

Father Lee Ki-Young knew that the Sunset Swordsman would enter the 24th forward base. It took exactly eight minutes to reach the 24th base from the 30th base, and he knew there wouldn't be any problems during that eight minutes.

The only explanation I could think of was that Father Lee Ki-Young could see the future, and it was the most reasonable explanation here.

'Is that this possible?'

He had to be looking at the future, or this would have been impossible. Did he take into account every single possible variable on this ever-changing battlefield and give orders based on what move had the highest success rate?

How was that possible? The Sunset Swordsman was moving incredibly fast as well.

Could a human really do something like that? Actually, was it even possible to keep up with someone moving that fast? Wait, could he really see the future? Right now, he was…

"Looking at the sky… he's looking at the sky," I mumbled.

"He looks up at the sky pretty often. I don't really know what he's looking at, though," Ahn Ki-Mo said.

'He's probably looking into the future, Mister Ahn. Look.'

"Prepare the snipers. Shoot an arrow toward the coordinates I just sent," Father Lee Ki-Young ordered.

- Yes, sir. It's been a while.

"Do it now," he ordered.

"Okay."

‘Look at that.’

The famous adventurers of Dawan whipped out their bows and took a stance along with Yu Ran, a named sniper of the Eight Seats, and Cheon Kwan-Wi. At Father Lee Ki-Young's orders, they unleashed arrows toward somewhere.

More than a hundred streams of light disappeared into the mist, but they continued shooting into the mist without any hesitation.

The result of their shooting soon appeared before us, and we saw it on the screen that was showing the Sunset Swordsman’s point of view.

Arrows were sticking out of the demon's head in front of him. It was the same for the demons flanking him as well as the demons behind him. The scene was blurry because of the mist, but the arrows made of light rained down on the pigeons non-stop.

If the archers and snipers had waited even a second longer, their arrows would have pierced the Sunset Swordsman rather than the demons. If the demons had reached the swordsman faster than expected, the arrows would have struck the Sunset Swordsman.

However, the Sunset Swordsman remained decisive as he weaved through the rain of arrows that the allied forces had showered upon the demons. The Sunset Swordsman moved forward, even though he couldn't see anything in the mist.

“…”

- Affirmative.

“…”

- Affirmative.

“…”

- Affirmative.

Was he not scared? No, was he even afraid of anything?

The Sunset Swordsman was smiling as he ran through the mist.

I glanced at Father Lee Ki-Young, and I saw him smiling like a madman while having a nosebleed. He looked like he was enjoying all this—enjoying the crazy things they were doing on the battlefield.

I was bothered by how Father Lee Ki-Young was trying to hold in his smile to no avail. I couldn't imagine him laughing out loud, but if he were alone, I was sure he would laugh just like the time he met Mister Ahn for the first time.

"Enter the 21st base," Father Lee-Ki Young ordered.

- Affirmative.

'He's already run across one-fifth of the battlefield.'

I finally understood why the map of the entire northern region was there.

"Kim! Get ready! We're going to get out of the temple! Park Deok-Gu yelled.

"Okay, Mister Park!" I answered.

"Hold up your shield! Your shield!" Park Deok-Gu ordered.

"O-Okay!"

"Hold up your shield! Forward! Move forward! Enemy magic and stray arrows on the right! Mages, cast your spells!" Park Deok-Gu shouted.

"Stop making things chaotic and just move forward, pig!" Father Lee Ki-Young shouted.

'Was that Father Lee Ki-Young's voice just now?'

- Is something wrong? Mr. Ki-Young? The call…

"It's nothing. Please continue with your mission," Father Lee Ki-Young said.

- Affirmative.

“There are spells flying toward us!” Park Deok-Gu pointed out.

“Just move forward,” Father Lee Ki-Young repeated.

I looked back and forth between the spells that were flying toward us and Father Lee Ki-Young, but he continued mumbling something I couldn't quite hear. He looked like he didn’t have the luxury to focus on anything else.

“Hyung-nim has told us to keep moving forward, so just move forward!” Park Deok-Gu roared.

‘What? Really? It’s going to be a direct hit!’

“Just move forward! Don’t hesitate and keep moving!” Park Deok-Gu shouted.

‘Mister Ahn, is it really okay to keep moving forward like this?’

“Move forward. Hurry. Don’t fall behind. Hurry up,” Ahn Ki-Mo said.

‘Really?’

“Forward!”

I closed my eyes and decided to follow the order. I started running forward, but I didn’t hear any explosions. When I opened my eyes again, I saw the Sunset Swordsman blocking the attacks with his large horns and wings.

‘When did he get here?’

“Mr. Ki-Young, are you…”

“Next,” Father Lee Ki-Young ordered.

“Got it,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

Kim Hyun-Sung and Lee Ki-Young looked at each other briefly. Then, Father Lee Ki-Young retracted his gaze and turned to look at the hand mirrors in front of him once again while the Sunset Swordsman stared at the battlefield ahead.

Soon, the Sunset Swordsman disappeared into the distance.

At that moment, I became sure of one thing: those two weren't…

'They aren't humans… '

They were individuals chosen by the gods; that was the only explanation that would make all of this make sense.

*An is included on the next page.

---

1. Kim Ye-Ri's POV ☜

CHAPTER 750
TO THE END (8)

'Ah, shit… I[1] *feel like my head is going to explode.'*

I knew it wasn't going to be easy, but I had to acknowledge the fact that it was more difficult than I thought.

'Damn it… '

I really had no energy to focus on other things. The only thing I could do was keep up with Kim Hyun-Sung's quick movements, so hearing Park Deok-Gu chattering away next to me was making my headache even worse.

"Did you do that just now?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

'Damn it, can't you tell? It was Kim Hyun-Sung.'

"When did he get here? I really don't know his limits! I told you! When the bro and hyung-nim work together, they're invincible!" Park Deok-Gu exclaimed.

'Alright, just shut up, man.'

"*Ahem…*"

"Just be quiet!" I shouted.

"O-Okay…" Park Deok-Gu mumbled.

- Excuse me?

"It's nothing," I said.

The battlefield had changed multiple times while I was scolding the pig.

'Shit. Still, I thought things were going to go well.'

I had obtained Elune's Telescope, and my Intelligence stats had increased, but it seemed that I was just being arrogant when I thought that I could already keep up with Kim Hyun-Sung without having a headache.

I found it ridiculous that I even thought about cornering Rafael while controlling Kim Hyun-Sung. Of course, it wasn't like I lacked preparations. I was just struggling to keep up with Kim Hyun-Sung. Fortunately, I had an excuse; it was the fact that I had many things to handle at the same time.

Kim Hyun-Sung had his large black wings, so he could move in basically all directions and angles. The earth wasn't the only area he could use as a battlefield, as even the sky was his battlefield.

In other words, I had to watch over him in all directions. Attacks could fall from the sky, or arrows flew toward him from the ground, and the fact that I had to be wary of all directions made me feel like I needed more eyes.

'Shit, shit, shit. Yeah, it's nothing more than an excuse.'

My incompetence didn't allow Kim Hyun-Sung to use a hundred percent of his power. I was sure that he would be able to move faster and kill enemies even more efficiently if I were just a bit more competent. I thought I was making him use everything he had, but I realized that it wasn't the case at all.

'Mr. Ki-Young, are you okay?'

What did he mean, 'are you okay'? He still had the luxury to ask me questions and worry about my well-being. He also had enough time to examine my current situation. He paused only for a few seconds, but he was aware of what kind of results those few seconds could bring, as well as their importance.

It was obvious. He was definitely thinking that he could make up for those few seconds with his abilities. As expected, Kim Hyun-Sung was picking up the pace, and his sulky and uncomfortable face seemed like it was telling me that this was too easy for him.

'This is really annoying. Is this really not enough? Are you not satisfied?'

It was like he was telling me that he could move even faster.

‘Is that all?’

I truly felt like he thought that way, and I wanted to pick up the pace as well, but it was easier said than done. Unfortunately, this tactic would be useless if I couldn't make the regressor use a hundred percent of his strength.

It was funny, but I was so incompetent that I couldn’t bring out the potential of the troops and was instead dragging them down.

If I were Kim Hyun-Sung, I would come up with a plan to cut ties with Lee Ki-Young. I’d probably think along the lines of, *'Mr. Ki-Young is useless now… I should try looking for someone else.'*

Obviously, it would never happen, but I was pretty annoyed at the thought alone.

‘Is this still not enough?’

I tapped on the Goddess’ Mirror. I knew this was my limit, but I couldn’t stop looking. I continued sending coordinates and quests to Kim Hyun-Sung, who had already reached the next base. I didn’t forget to keep an eye on the battlefield. I swept my gaze across the hand mirrors before me and focused on a hand mirror that was a little more comfortable to look at compared to the others.

I glanced to the side and saw the others moving busily to create a situation room. That was when I realized that I had climbed down from Park Deok-Gu’s shield and was sitting on a chair, but nothing else had changed because I knew what I had to do.

‘Alright, fine. Was the situation before not to your liking? Visibility was extremely low, and the situation room was just temporary at the time. Hold on, damn it. I’ll do it properly this time.’

I looked at the screen again, and I saw many different view scenes. It was like looking from an insect’s eyes. It wasn’t easy processing the enormous amount of information that rushed toward me at once because Kim Hyun-Sung was moving non-stop as well.

In the end, I had to give Kim Hyun-Sung an obscure quest. I decided to adjust the surroundings so that he would be at an advantage that way. It would be dangerous, but I had to do this.

- Mr. Ki-Young?

'I'm sending it, damn it. Wait.'

Who was at the 21st base again? Who was the closest? Park Yeon-Joo? Was she there? I looked for the guild master of the Black Swan using the Telescope while tapping a hand mirror with one hand. I soon saw Park Yeon-Joo, and she was fighting the pigeons. She looked the same as she looked during the Park Deok-Gu hidden camera prank incident; she showed that she was worthy of being one of the Eight Seats.

"Miss Park Yeon-Joo, Hyun-Sung is heading that way. I'll send you the coordinates of a location as soon as he arrives, and I want you to go there with him," I instructed.

- *Huh?*

She had no time to ask questions, as Kim Hyun-Sung had already rushed past her. It seemed that she was worthy of being the guild master of one of the three major guilds in Lindel, as she immediately reacted and took to the air.

It was difficult to describe how in sync they looked as they moved and swung their swords in sync with each other. They would split, then come together, and they would attack with their backs against each other. While Kim Hyun-Sung was moving forward, Park Yeon-Joo stuck closely to him and shot black swords toward the pigeons.

Eventually, they created space that I didn't think was possible to create on this battlefield.

'Ah, shit. I forgot about stamina recovery.'

It would be ideal to cast a recovery and buff spell right now, but it was too late for that, so there was nothing I could do about it. I needed mages to do that for those two.

Kim Hyun-Sung and Park Yeon-Joo stopped briefly, and a massive spell started before them, but they were beyond the spell range. Moreover, the wind spell that was cast earlier pushed them away.

- Affirmative.

- Guild Master.

- It's been a while. You're the Guild Master of the Black Swan Guild… Affirmative.

- Seeing you alive is really…

- Affirmative.

The two started moving again and gained momentum. Park Yeon-Joo was shooting out swords in all directions while spinning and using flashy techniques in the air. Kim Hyun-Sung took advantage of the space she made to wreak havoc with his sword.

- Mr. Hyun-Sung, above you!

Park Yeon-Joo shouted upon seeing pigeons unleashing light from the sky, but Kim Hyun-Sung didn't seem to care because a group of mages nearby had just channeled their protection spells, and…

Whiiir!!!

A beam made out of Dragon Breath struck the pigeons above Kim Hyun-Sung.

This was the end of Park Yeon-Joo's mission.

'Not bad, right, Hyun-Sung?'

- Please be careful, Master of the Blue Guild.

- Affirmative.

Kim Hyun-Sung spread his wings and flew into the air. I sent him the coordinates after taking into account the trajectories of the arrows flying toward him, and I saw him twisting and turning in the air.

'That was pretty good, right?'

I was really hoping that he was thinking that way because I had put a lot of work into it.

‘You can move even faster.’

'You can move faster now, right?'

BOOM!

A powerful Dragon Breath filled the sky as Kim Hyun-Sung continued flying toward the coordinates I had sent to him. He was moving one step ahead of the pigeons as if he knew exactly when the Dragon Breath just now would hit.

He barely managed to dodge all of the pigeons' attacks. Actually, it looked like the edge of his wings was singed, so… it seemed that there was a very tiny error.

Well, I didn't think that error would be a problem. I was sure he’d be fine. I didn't even think that he had noticed it as he streaked across the skies, and his expression remained unchanging.

‘Is this still not enough?’

I had no idea how far I needed to go, and honestly, I wanted to quit because of my headache.

‘How’s this?’

- Affirmative.

‘Try moving like this.’

- Affirmative.

There was still no change. Yes, I had made a slight mistake, but Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't the type to make mistakes. He still looked dissatisfied for some reason, which annoyed me, as I had no idea why he looked so dissatisfied.

‘I need to see more things and think even faster.’

I swiped with my fingers, and the screens stretched to fill the entire situation room.

The screens, which were in a variety of sizes, displayed many different scenes.

'Maybe I'm kind of behind.'

Kim Hyun-Sung was doing more than fulfilling his mission.

There was a slight delay in sending orders, so he was even helping the troops.

'Is this still not enough?'

I felt like my eyes were bloodshot right now. My head was spinning, but my high Intelligence stats helped me stay focused. My nose was still bleeding, but I didn't have the luxury of time to wipe it off with a tissue.

I decided to wiped it off with my arm, but it felt like my entire face was bleeding rather than just my nose.

'Still not enough? This is fine, right?'

- I'll speed up a bit more.

'This bastard.'

Any more than this and it would be beyond my capabilities. My head could no longer take more information. The hard drive in my head was screaming, and the fuse was about to trip.

'What more do you want me to do?'

My head and eyes were processing the entire northern region in real time, and I didn't want to say this about myself, but I had already achieved something that was beyond the capabilities of ordinary humans. I even questioned whether something like this was even possible. Yeah, this was my limit.

'I need to feel more of it… '

I had to feel more so that I would feel like I was on the battlefield myself. I had to be in sync with Kim Hyun-Sung. Just like how he was looking at the battlefield, I needed to look at the same thing he was looking at in real time.

'I need to have first-hand experience.'

I needed a completely new type of information rather than just visual information. I need something like emotions. I needed to feel everything: his thoughts, the dangers to his life, the unpleasant stench filling his nose, the instinctive movements that come with his ample experience, the ground beneath him, the flow of the air, and the blood of his enemies that had covered his skin. I needed to feel everything Kim Hyun-Sung was feeling and extract information from that.

'Is that even possible?'

If it was impossible, then I had to make it possible. At the very least, I had to be as close to it as possible. I had to start with Kim Hyun-Sung's point of view. I had to see what he was actually seeing, and I wasn't talking about looking at his point of view through the Goddess' Mirror. I could probably do that since I had the Telescope.

Could I split the Telescope in half? Would I be able to see what he was seeing if I let him borrow the other half of the Telescope? Was that even possible with my remaining holy power?

I was starting to get desperate.

I was trying to find the answer, but I couldn't figure it out.

I felt like I was behind, and the feeling of constantly being a few steps behind was destroying my self-esteem.

'You think I can't do it?'

If it had been impossible, I wouldn't have gotten this far.

'I can do it.'

It was definitely possible with the system—no, it was an ability that I should have had in the very beginning, so I had to do this. The system had to give it to me, as it had always been mine.

When I stomped in annoyance, a system prompt appeared before me.

[A new Mythic-rank attribute has been unlocked.]

"Shit, I knew this was going to happen."

[Mythic Rank - Regressor Instruction Manual]

---

1. Lee Ki-Young's POV ☜

PDF by: traitorAIZEN